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Katyushas explode around Lebanese village

MARJAYOUN (R) — Eight Katyusha rockets fired by guerrillas exploded on Friday around an Israeli-held village in South Lebanon but caused no damage, pro-Israeli security sources said. Three rockets landed around the village of Blat in the morning and five more in the afternoon, exploding harmlessly on hillsides, the sources with the pro-Israeli South Lebanon Army (SLA) said. Blat is about three kilometres north of Marjayoun, headquarters of the SLA. The pro-Israeli sources said there was no truth to a report that Katyushas were fired at Marjayoun hospital. A Reuters report earlier quoted Israeli security sources as saying Katyushas were fired at the hospital on the northern outskirts of Marjayoun. The SLA sources said they saw the rockets exploding near Blat more than three kilometres from the hospital. Israeli troops and the SLA occupy a 15-kilometre wide border zone in South Lebanon designed to prevent cross-border guerrilla attacks.

Iraq wins Baghdad match with Iran

BAGHDAD (R) — The two team managers swapped copies of the Koran before the match. 60,000 fans squeezed into the stadium and the streets of Baghdad were all but deserted for the first major soccer match between Iraq and Iran for 20 years. Iraq's Talaba beat Iran's Bahman Club 2-1 on aggregate in the Asian Football Club championship on Friday. More than 60,000 people crammed Baghdad's Stadium, built for 40,000, raising flags, beating drums, dancing, chanting, and clapping non-stop for two hours. Talaba had originally beaten Bahman in Iran 1-0 on Nov. 10 in the first leg. The Iranians struck back on Friday, when Bahman's Mohammed Khakbour scored in the 63rd minute to finish 1-0 up at the end of 90 minutes, forcing extra time because both teams were equal in the overall contest. But in the third minute of extra time, Talaba's Qahtan Jatheer scored to win a place in the next round for the Iraqis. Uday, eldest son of President Saddam Hussein, who heads Iraq's National Olympic Committee, rushed to embrace the players. Wearing a black leather jacket, the bearded Uday clapped as he elbowed his way through the cheering crowd.

King congratulates Spanish monarch

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Friday congratulated King Juan Carlos on the 20th anniversary of his assumption of his constitutional powers. In a televised message to the Spanish monarch, King Hussein voiced pride in the friendship between him and King Juan Carlos.

Prince Abdullah wins boat race

SOUTH SHUNEH (Petra) — His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah on Friday won a boat race organised by the Marriott Hotel in the Dead Sea. Teams representing the Marriott, Medical Equipment Service, Aramex, the British Embassy and Pirelli took part in the race. Prince Abdullah's team consisted of Their Royal Highnesses Prince Ghazi Ben Mohammad, Prince Mir'ed Ben Ra'd, Prince Faisal Ben Ra'd and Prince Firas Ben Ra'd. The trophy was handed to Prince Abdullah by HRH Princess Rania.

Peres to meet Clinton on Dec. 11

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres will hold talks with U.S. President Bill Clinton at the White House on December 11, the White House announced Friday. The two leaders will discuss implementation of the recent Palestinian self-rule accord and the "next steps in advancing Syria-Israel negotiations," the White House said in a statement. The talks will mark the first U.S. visit by the new Israeli premier since his predecessor, Yitzhak Rabin, was assassinated after a peace rally in Tel Aviv on November 4. In an address to the Knesset on Wednesday, Mr. Peres underscored his willingness to reach a peace agreement with Damascus on the way to a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Mr. Peres was to present to Mr. Clinton a detailed plan for peace with Syria and request that the U.S. president call a summit meeting between himself and Syrian President Hafez Al Assad, according to Israel's Ambassador to Washington Itamar Rabinovitch.

Israel shuts PLO security offices

SALFIT (AFP) — The Israeli army on Friday closed offices set up by the Palestinian security services in the West Bank town of Salfit saying they broke the autonomy accords, military radio said. The offices were opened in Salfit, north of Ramallah by the Palestinian security services headed by West Bank commander Rajub Jibril. Military radio said that under the terms of the Israel-Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) autonmoy accords the Palestinians were barred from having security services offices in rural areas. Under a deal signed on Sept. 28, Israel is to evacuate six West Bank towns and transfer them to Palestinian control by the end of the year to allow elections to take place in January.

French filmmaker Louis Malle dies

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Louis Malle, the celebrated French director who turned out classic films in English as well, has died at the age of 63 after losing his fight with lymphatic cancer, a spokeswoman said Friday. Publicist Pat Kingsley said Malle, whose titles included "Au Revoir Les Enfants," "Les Amants," "Pretty Baby" and "Atlantic City," died Thursday evening at his Beverly Hills home. Malle had been undergoing treatment for lymphatic cancer in the United States where he lived with his wife, actress Candice Bergen. Born in the northern French city of Thumeries on Oct. 30, 1932, Malle was never shy about taking on scandalous topics such as incest, child prostitution or the French collaboration with the Nazis.

Jordan seeks to protect Iraqi unity, territorial integrity, Kabariti says

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan is committed to preserving the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq, Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Al Kabariti said Friday.

Mr. Kabariti was commenting on reports that Jordan was having contacts with prominent Iraqi opposition leaders in London. The contacts followed the defection in August to Jordan of Hussein Kamel, Iraq's minister of industry and a son-in-law of President Saddam Hussein.

"A disintegrated Iraq is not our objective and we are committed to ensuring that Iraq remains a sovereign state with unity among its different factions and its territory being protected from all threats of division and partition," Mr. Kabariti told the Jordan Times.

"Jordan is not involved in any quest to change the regime in Iraq," said Mr. Kabariti. "This is an issue left to the people of Iraq, outside and inisde the country. But Jordan, as a country neighbouring Iraq, has indeed an interest in seeing a change in the situation in Iraq, particularly in terms of the suffering of the people of Iraq, and we believe that the starting point is a dialogue among the major components of the Iraqi society."

Mr. Kabariti brushed aside claims that Jordan was working towards a divided Iraq.

Syrian vice-President Abdul Halim Khaddam made the accusation in a recent interview with the Syrian state-owned Tishreen newspaper.

According to Iraqi dissident sources in London, Jordan is calling on them to launch a national dialogue among Iraq's Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds to put an end to the chaotic situation following the August 1990-February 1991 Iraqi occupation of Kuwait and the punitive measures imposed by the U.N. against Iraq that have led to immense suffering for the people of Iraq.

In recent public comments, His Majesty King Hussein called for dialogue among Iraqi sects "to get together credible representation from these three great concentrations of people and work out a national reconciliation between them and probably a new constitution."

"The time has come to look at the possibility of a federation or a federal state in Iraq," the King recently told Newsweek.

The first step towards the called-for dialogue, according to the sources, is an agreement among the three sects on a dedicated and concerted action for "coherence among themselves."

"This would mean," according to a source close to the Khoei Foundation in London, "a clear understanding that the rights of every sect in Iraq would be fully respected in a democratic atmosphere and that democracy, political pluralism and respect for human rights would be the basic foundations of a new Iraq."

It also implies "respect for all of Iraq's neighbours and guarantees that the new Iraq would not undertake adventurist actions such as the invasion of Kuwait and any postures that imply any threat to any of its neighbours."

The Khoei Foundation is also demanding "full respect for all Shiite shrines in Iraq and firm resolve against Iraq undertaking any action against the interests of Iran, politically or religiously."

The Khoei Foundation in

(Continued on page 7)

Peres woos religious parties to expand base of mandate

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Prime Minister Shimon Peres has said he would woo Israel's religious parties despite the objections of his left-wing coalition Meretz allies.

"We will continue with our contacts in this direction, whatever the reticence of our Meretz allies," he said Thursday. "I am sure they will not quit a governing coalition backed from the outside by religious groups."

As Mr. Peres announced his new cabinet on Tuesday, Meretz backed down at the last minute on a threat to abandon the Labour-led cabinet over assurances it had made to Jewish religious groups.

The National Religious Party (NRP), facing a moral crisis since the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by a religious fanatic at a Tel Aviv peace rally on Nov. 4, has toned down its policies.

For more than two decades, it stood for annexation of the occupied Palestinian territories claiming that they were biblical Jewish lands.

But the party is now offering to support the government from the outside, while calling for a slowdown of the autonomy accords with the Palestinians and a referendum on the Golan Heights.

It also wants the government to respect the status quo on religious issues.

Mr. Peres has named a moderate settler rabbi, Yehuda Amital, as a minister without portfolio to set up bridges with Jewish settlers and religious groups, in an effort to isolate the right-wing opposition Likud.

Next week, the prime minister is to meet rabbi Ovadia Yossef, spiritual leader of the ultra-orthodox party Shas which quit the Rabin cabinet in 1994 because its leader was implicated in a financial scandal.

Deputy Foreign Minister Elie Dayan said other religious groups would also be contacted. "The wider our parliamentary base, the more we'll be in a position to take courageous decisions," he said.

A fierce critic of Mr. Rabin's peace policies before his assassination, Likud has fallen back sharply in the opinion polls since the murder, ahead of parliamentary elections due by November 1996.

U.S. President Bill Clinton pledged Washington's support on Friday for Mr. Peres' new government and regional peace moves, an Israeli spokeswoman said.

"At this moment, I want to assure you that the United States will continue to stand with the government and the people of Israel as together we work to build a future of hope and peace for Israel and its neighbours," Mr. Peres's spokeswoman Aliza Goren quoted a message from Mr. Clinton as saying.

Former army chief Ehud Barak reached for the mantle of his mentor Rabin on Thursday, promising as Israel's new foreign minister to pursue both peace and security.

"As one who has seen wars," Mr. Barak said, echoing Mr. Rabin, "I know the value of making peace —

(Continued on page 7)

Peace force will cover all of Bosnia, Perry affirms

VIENNA (Agencies) — U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry said here Friday that the international peace force in Bosnia-Herzegovina would be deployed throughout the former Yugoslav republic, including Serb-held territory.

Under the Bosnia agreement, initialled at a U.S. military base near Dayton, Ohio, Tuesday, the so-called Implementation Force (IFOR) can operate in the entire territory of the former Yugoslav republic, Mr. Perry told journalists here.

"One of the tasks we will have is enforcing a zone of separation in the Bosnian Serb territory as well as in the (Muslim-Croat) federation territory," Mr. Perry said. "Therefore that task alone will require to have NATO forces in Bosnian subterritory.

"In addition to that we expect the NATO forces to be transitting in the subterritories. That's why it was critical that the NATO forces have access to all territory," Mr. Perry added.

Some Bosnian Serb leaders cited NATO presence on their territory as one of several clauses in the peace agreement which they felt were unacceptable.

Serb leader Radovan Karadzic has since agreed to comply with the terms of the agreement.

The U.S defence secretary said Washington was keen on Moscow's participation in the force, and that special arrangements would have to be made to incorporatre Russian troops in the NATO-led mission.

"If the Russian forces participate in the peacekeeping, they will participate as part of the IFOR and the discussions we had with Russians are not yet concluded. But they are along the line of a Russian brigade being part of an American division with headquarters in Tuzla."

Mr. Perry and his Russian counterpart Pavel Grachev agreed Nov. 8 that Russia would contribute 1,000-1,500 troops to the 60,000-strong peace implementation force, but have still to resolve the key question of political control over the operation.

The IFOR troops will mainly come from NATO member states, with the United States contributing 20,000 soldiers.

Meanwhile Bosnian government troops looted a U.N. base housing Bangladeshi troops on Friday as U.N. peacekeepers prepared to make way for the NATO force.

There were also reports from U.N. officials that Croat forces were burning and looting houses in an area of northwest Bosnia which is scheduled to revert to Serb control under the peace agreement.

"We have initial reports... of the looting of the U.N. camp at Velika Kladusa by the Bosnian army," U.N. spokesman Lieutenant-Colonel Chris Vernon said in Sarajevo.

"At around 0100 hours (Friday) Bosnian army personnel entered the camp and effectively went through the camp taking what they thought fit against the protests of the Bangladeshis."

(Continued on page 7)

Prince Hassan leaves for U.K.

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan on Friday left for London on a several day-private visit to the United Kingdom. He was seen off at the airport by Chief Chamberlain Prince Ra'ad Ben Zeid, who was earlier sworn in as Regent, Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, Upper House of Parliament Speaker Ahmad Lawzi, King's private Chamberlain Prince Ali Ben Nayef, Royal Court Chief Marwan Al Qasem, Prince Hassan's private advisor Mohammad Saqqaf and other senior officials.

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan is seen off at the airport by Prince Ra'd, Sharif Zeid and other senior officials (Petra photo).

Jordanian, British air units are twinned

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein, the Supreme Commander of the Jordanian Armed Forces, who is currently on a working visit to the United Kingdom, on Thursday attended a ceremony to twin the sixth squadrons of the royal air forces of Jordan and Britain, Jordan Television reported Friday.

His Royal Highness Prince Faisal Ben Al Hussein, the commander of the Jordanian Sixth Squadron, presented the flag of the squadron to his British counterpart.

In a speech delivered at the ceremony, Prince Faisal said the twinning of the two squadrons was a sign of the friendship and trust existing between the two countries.

"Forty five years ago last month, His Majesty the late King Abdullah presented you with (his royal standards) as a sign of trust, confidence and friendship he had in the squadron," Prince Faisal recalled.

"I am honoured to extend this association with our flag of friendship, the flag of the 6th squadron of the Royal Jordanian Air Force, again as a sign of the trust and friendship that exist between us," Prince Faisal said.

He continued: "Over the last decade the world has seen many changes. In Europe you have seen the end of the cold war and the start of a partnership for peace. We, in Jordan, have also joined in a new peace with the region, a peace based on mutual respect and understanding, a peace for all in our region. Yet we must remain vigilant and ready to combat the opponents of both peace, of progress, and opponents of a bright future, for those who support darkness, who would feed on hatred and fear, ignorance and suspicions. Yet the strong relationship between our two kingdoms has always been based on mutual respect and friendship. This ceremony is but a symbol of the friendships forged over a number of years through both visits and exercises, of friendship that symbolises our common goals and understandings and a hope for a more peaceful and brighter future for all."

King Hussein attended a similar ceremony held in May at the King Hussein Air College where the flag of the British squadron was presented to the Jordanian squadron to commemorate 45 years since King Abdullah presented the flag to the British squadron.

Friday's ceremony was attended by Princess Alia Al Faisal, the chief of staff of the Royal Jordanian Air Force and Jordan's military attache in London and senior British officers.

Bangladesh president dissolves legislature

DHAKA (R) — Bangladesh President Abdur Rahman Biswas dissolved parliament on Friday night and asked Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia to stay until a general election is called.

The official BSS news agency said Mr. Biswas acted under powers conferred on him by the country's constitution.

Earlier, Ms. Zia asked the president to dissolve parliament because opposition groups had refused to take part in a by-election for Dec. 15.

Ms. Zia said the election commission would make arrangements for holding a general election — not due until March, 1996 but expected to be held before schedule.

Opposition parties resigned from parliament last December, accusing the government of rigging a by-election in 1994 and of sweeping corruption.

They want Ms. Zia, elected in 1991 in what were billed as the country's first free polls, to step down and hand power to a neutral caretaker administration to hold free and fair elections.

Opposition leaders rushed into an emergency meeting after the dissolution was announced.

In a radio and television broadcast, Ms. Zia invited all opposition parties to take part in the coming election.

She said the constitution made no provision for the transfer of power to an unelected prime minister, reaffirming her position that any election would have to be under the government of her ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

Main opposition leader Sheikh Hasina, speaking at a rally of her Awami League Party only hours before broadcast, Ms. Zia's broadcast called for an indefinite shutdown of roads, railways, ferries and airports from Dec. 7 in an effort to force elections under a neutral authority.

Malaysian pilgrims pass an Israeli solider as they leave under heavy rains as the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron. The Israeli army will remain in control of Hebron until March, when the town is expected to be handed over to the Palestinian National Authority (AFP photo)

Arafat welcomes Hamas role in polls, urges Bonn to tie in Iran

BONN (Agencies) — Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat on Friday welcomed plans within the Hamas movement to set up a political party to contest the first elections in the Palestinian autonomous region in January.

Speaking alongside German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel, the head of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) said the elections would be "a milestone for democracy and pluralism" in the Palestinian territories.

Mr. Arafat told journalists there had been "contacts, not negotiations" with Hamas, and that he had been informed a week ago of the formation of a political party that would participate in the elections.

He very much welcomed the participation of Hamas and other political parties in the Jan. 20 elections, he said. Mr. Kinkel too said that he hoped Hamas and other parties would take part.

The Palestinian leader also expressed "cautious optimism" in his talks with Mr. Kinkel that Syria would soon be drawn into the Middle East peace process, and said he wanted it widened to include Syria and Lebanon.

Answering questions on the second day of a visit to Germany, Mr. Arafat further said he would like Mr. Kinkel to help influence Iran in order to overcome the latter's resistance to the peace process.

"I hope Mr. Kinkel can help us to have a positive influence on the Iranian position," the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) chairman said.

Mr. Kinkel was forced to postpone a conference on Islam earlier this month after parliament passed a resolution saying the Iranian foreign minister would not be welcome at the event.

The vote was a protest against Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani's statement that the murder of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was "divine revenge" for last month's killing of Islamic Jihad leader Fathi Shaqaqi in Malta.

Germany's insistence on maintaining contact with Iran is regarded with suspicion by its allies, especially Britain and the United States which accuse Tehran of sponsoring international terrorism.

Mr. Arafat thanked Bonn for the aid it had given to the Palestinian autonomous regions and said Germany's experience of rebuilding damaged infrastructure was also needed.

"We need German technical experience to rebuild what was destroyed in our occupied land," Mr. Arafat said. "Technical help is what we need and German technical help, above all, is what our economy needs. We need German know-how."

"We hope for a German industrial park and we hope you will help us in building an airport and port," Mr. Arafat told Mr. Kinkel. "German equipment is already being used in our hospitals."

Bonn is the biggest contributor to the European Union's Palestinian aid programme. Last year it gave 76.6 million marks (54 million) to the programme plus 80 million marks ($57 million) in bilateral aid.

"The important thing now is that the people in the autonomous regions feel that the peace process does not just consist of ink and paper," Mr. Kinkel said.

Mr. Arafat invited Mr. Kinkel to spend the first Christmas under the Palestinian flag in Bethlehem.

Bethlehem is to be handed

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Palestinians may have trouble getting out vote

By Said Ghazali
The Associated Press

ZAATARA — Fuad Abu Amriyeh's first instinct was to refuse the election official's plea that he register to vote in upcoming Palestinian elections.

"I believe in the rule of God more than in democracy. I do not want to vote," protested the 40-year-old construction worker when Daoud Abu Raiyeh, a teacher enlisted to register voters, came to his one-storey cement house on this West Bank hilltop.

Only when Mr. Abu Raiyeh assured him registration in no way constituted a promise to vote did the sceptical Palestinian agree to provide personal data and sign the proffered form.

Such lack of electoral enthusiasm is widespread in the West Bank and Gaza, despite general joy at the gradual Israeli troop withdrawal from Palestinian areas in accordance with the Israel-Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) autonomy accords.

The phenomenon is deepening fears the PLO's attempt to establish the first true Arab democracy is off on the wrong foot.

In part, it is based on dissatisfaction with PLO chief Yasser Arafat. Although he is running for autonomy head virtually unopposed, many Palestinians feel the regime he has created since May 1994 in the autonomous Gaza Strip and Jericho is as corrupt and inefficient.

In addition, the credibility of the vote tentatively scheduled for Jan. 20 is damaged by fears the electoral system is designed to shut Mr. Arafat's opposition out of the

Nabiha Abu Rmeileh, an election candidate

autonomy's quasi-parliament.

And perhaps most worryingly, the Palestinian elite is starting to realise that there is a chasm between their aspirations for a Western-style democracy and the traditional Arab lifestyle that still prevails in Palestinian refugee camps and villages.

In this village of 6,000 overlooking the Dead Sea, for example, most people said they would support relatives regardless of any political issues because they expect a system of patronage.

Ali Bajali, an Arabic-language teacher, said he would vote for his cousin "even if his ideas contradict mine."

"If I have a complaint, if I have a request, it is difficult for my cousin to say no, but it is easy for one who is not my relative," he reasoned.

"Political parties cannot replace tribalism," said Ibrahim Dowaib, an elderly man.

Faisal Hussein, the top-PLO official in Jerusalem, said that was the wrong direction for Palestinian politics.

"We are not talking about ideas and principles, we are talking about clans... It is a bad situation," he said.

Part of the ennui derives from disappointment that the peace process has not eased most Palestinians' economic difficulties.

Mr. Abu Amriyeh, the construction worker, said he has not been able to get to his job laying tiles in Tel Aviv for six months.

Mr. Arafat is "a new dictator" whose dream of Palestinian independence will only erect more barriers between the village and his work inside Israel," Mr. Abu Amriyeh said.

Such talk is reinforced by indications that the election law Mr. Arafat drew up earlier this year will not give the leftist and Islamic fundamentalist opposition — both opposed to Mr. Arafat's peacemaking with Israel — a fair stake.

Under the election law, the West Bank and Gaza are divided into 16 districts of several seats each. In each area, the party that wins a plurality gets all the seats.

Khalil Shaqaqi, a political science professor at Al Najah University in Nablus, said Mr. Arafat's Fateh movement could thus win all 82 seats.

That, he warned, will alienate opponents like Hamas and diminish chances they might abandon attacks on Israelis in favour of political discourse.

Mr. Shaqaqi said the Palestinians needed a proportional representation system similar to Israel's.

"We need to translate the sharp political disputes among Palestinian factions into debates in the parliament. (If) the opposition has no chance to participate... They cycle of violence will not be stopped," he said.

Yemen wants to join GCC

SANAA (R) — Yemen feels its natural place should be within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) despite strains in relations with some of its members since the 1991 Gulf crisis, a senior Yemeni official said.

Parliamentary Speaker Sheikh Abdullah Ben Hussein Al Ahmar said: "Yemen is a part of the Arabian Peninsula and what links us with our brothers in the peninsula and Gulf states is much stronger than anything else."

"Therefore, our natural place should be in any regional block grouping these states," he said in a reference to the six-member GCC.

Yemeni ties with GCC states, especially Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, were damaged because of Sanaa's sympathy with Iraq after its invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Relations with Saudi Arabia have gradually improved since then, but strains still persist with Kuwait.

Sheikh Ahmar's remarks were quoted late on Thursday by Al Islah weekly newspaper, organ of the Islamic Islah party which he leads.

The GCC groups Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Oman.

Sheikh Ahmar said Yemeni membership of the Riyadh-based group would aim at "strengthening links and preserving interests of the region and defending its rights."

He said Yemeni ties with Saudi Arabia were "growing" and added: "We feel our brothers in Kuwait have the same desire to bring relations back to normal and this makes us hope it would be back to normal soon."

Turkish Islamists aim to rule alone

ANKARA (R) — Turkey's Islamic party on Thursday vowed to rule alone after a Dec. 24 general election, believing years of hard work at the grassroots level could help it oust Prime Minister Tansu Ciller.

"We are going towards single-party rule," Abdullah Gul, a deputy chairman of the Welfare Party (RP), told Reuters. "And all the signs show that... We have been working with the people to come to power alone since the last elections in 1991."

Ms. Ciller has been using the RP's prominence to scare members of European Parliament into approving a customs union deal with Europe, which sees the country as a secular bulwark in a turbulent Muslim region.

Senior RP Deputy Abdul Latif Sener warned Turkey's Western allies that his party would take a tougher line against them, slamming the Bosnia peace deal as hurting Bosnia's Muslims.

"This shows Turkey and the Islamic World must be strong," he told parliament. "We need an independent Turkey, and that means RP."

A recent survey by Ms. Ciller's True Path Party (DYP) put the Islamists in second place, only three percentage points behind her. Polls by other political parties put RP first.

Independent opinion polls are banned and it is unclear if the RP would get enough votes to rule without forming a coalition government. Secularist parties may steer clear of Welfare in any post-election bargaining to forge a coalition.

The Islamists say a mixture of persistent hard work, religious belief and attention to the needs of the Turkish people have brought their 26-year-old movement to prominence.

"We are the only party with close contacts with ordinary people," said Mustafa Bas, head of RP election headquarters in Ankara. "We are their only true representatives."

"We organise people to visit the sick and buy them medicine, help with funerals, give food to the poor, and our members are instructed to get to know and inform everyone likely to vote in their area — what other party would do that?"

Other parties have little direct contact with voters.

Mr. Bas said Welfare had more than 2,500 smaller election centres — working all year, every year — throughout Turkey.

At least five party members in each voting district were responsible for lobbying and helping organise the poorly-educated or invalided to on polling day.

RP election officials say their party members were mobilised to get Turkey's politically disinterested 18- and 19-year-olds — newly eligible to vote — to sign up to voting lists. They say some half the estimated two million new voters support RP.

Many others tour coffee houses, private houses and even bars and public offices to spread the cause of Welfare.

"Our people work for nothing, they even pay their fare to go to make an RP speech — in other parties people expect financial return," senior RP election official Ahmet Fidan told Reuters. "Our sympathisers in Europe pay to come home and vote for us."

At the last general elections in October 1991, more than 17,000 of the 45,200 expatriates came back to Turkey to vote chose the RP.

Turkey looks increasingly likely to clinch the EU customs deal less than two weeks before polling, which Ms. Ciller hopes to present at home as a victory for Turkey's Western orientation as opposed to the RP's Islamist vision.

Iran warns against conflict between Sunnis, Shiites

TEHRAN (R) — Iran's President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani on Friday warned against stirring disunity between followers of the two main branches of Islam, Shiites and Sunnis, residing in Iran.

"I tell those who can broadcast their ideas to be careful and refrain from baseless discussions which might disrupt the existing unity or cause division and hatred among Shiites and Sunnis," he said in Friday sermon.

It was not immediately clear whom was he addressing.

"There are some who are ignorant but compassionate... why should we think that since we and they follow different sects we should have conflict?," Mr. Rafsanjani said in the speech broadcat live on Tehran Radio.

Speaking on his last week's visit to Iran's Kurdistan province where the majority of Kurds are Sunni, Mr. Rafsanjani said "before my trip escapee counter-revolutionary groups in their radios had done a lot to imply (there was) insecurity in Kurdistan and even had made threats."

"But people paid no attention to such threats at all... no evidence of disunity could be seen in Kurdistan," he said.

Iran's state-run television showed repeatedly scenes of cheering crowds of thousands when Mr. Rafsanjani visited various Kurdish cities and villages.

Mr. Rafsanjani said figures showed there was more infrastructure projects carried out in Kurdistan compared with other Iranian provinces. He gave no figures.

Peres overtures to orthodox open new front with liberals

By Arieh O'Sullivan
The Associated Press

LIBERAL JEWISH religious leaders on Thursday said they would turn to U.S. Jewry to fight what they described as Prime Minister Shimon Peres' efforts to win the support of Israel's orthodox political parties at their expense.

"Peres will have to pay the price of antagonising world Jewry," warned Rabbi Richard Hirsch, executive director of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, at a news conference. "Does he want to start a war between the Jews?"

The vast majority of American Jewry belong to the reform and conservative streams, while in Israel the stricter orthodox movement holds sway among the minority who are at all observant.

Mr. Peres, whose new government was sworn in Wednesday, is trying to widen his narrow parliamentary majority of 63 out of 120 by drawing in several religious parties, all adhering to orthodoxy.

Like his predecssor Yitzhak Rabin, Mr. Peres feels a larger majority would free him to make concessions in Mideast peace talks. In addition, he seeks to heal a secular-religious rift that climaxed in Mr. Rabin's Nov. 4 assassination by an extremist Jew.

Mr. Peres is reportedly promising to preserve the status quo in which orthodox Judaism enjoys a monopoly in personal status matters like marriage, divorce and burial. That would halt the slow but gradual progress made recently by the other groups.

At issue, in particular, is the question of conversions in the wake of supreme court decision last week forcing the government to recognise reform and conservative conversions — which the orthodox bitterly oppose as too lenient.

Uri Regev, a leading reform rabbi, said Mr. Peres was offering the orthodox parties legislation reversing the court's decision in exchange for their support in parliament.

Yossi Beilin, the cabinet minister who is heading negotiations with the religious parties, denied any such agreement had yet been reached.

Mr. Hirsch said representatives from Israel's reform and conservative movements were planning to travel to the United States to seek U.S. Jews' support against the government's intentions.

"We are going to make a fight out of it," Mr. Hirsch said. "American Jews... will use this as a pretext to stop giving Israel support."

He said a major conference of 5,000 reform Jewish leaders was planned in Atlanta next week.

The reform movement claims a membership of more than 1.4 million out of the three million U.S. Jews who have an affiliation.

Most of the rest belong to orthodox and conservative congregation. About half of the roughly three million U.S. Jews are unaffiliated.

In Israel, streams other than orthodoxy are growing but still widely viewed as foreign imports. They have attracted only several thousand followers, many of them European and American immigrants.

In addition, the liberal groups have attracted some recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union who are not considered Jewish by orthodox rabbis.

About two-thirds of Israel's 4.6 million Jews describe themselves as not religiously observant.

Oslo to extradite Ansari

OSLO (AFP) — Norway's King Haral V is expected to reject Palestinian hijacker Soraya Ansari's appeal on her extradition to Germany, the Norwegian news agency NTB said Thursday.

The king has the final say in certain matters treated by cabinet ministers, who are scheduled to discuss Ms. Ansari's appeal either Nov. 24 or Dec. 1.

The Norwegian justice ministry decided to mid-October that he could be extradited to Germany to stand trial.

Ms. Ansari, 41, is the sole survivor of four Palestinians who hijacked a German Lufthansa airliner in Somalia in 1977, in which the German pilot was killed. Ms. Ansari, who has lived in Norway since 1991, was arrested last October.

This appeal is the last chance for the Palestinian in the Norwegian legal system. If it fails, she could appeal to the European Court of Justice in Strasbourg, France, although her lawyer said that would be very unlikely.

"The case has been such a heavyload for Soraya. We don't want to waste more time if we are not sure of success," Heidi Bache-Wiig said.

According to legal experts, the European Court does not usually take on extradition cases.

If Ms. Ansari is extadited, her court case could begin as early as March or April, German judicial officials have said.

She can be tried in the German courts for hijacking, hostage-taking, accomplice to murder for the death of the pilot, and attempted murder of the German commando team that stormed the plane to free the hostages, according to decisions taken by Norwegian justice officials.

She can not, however, be tried for attempted murder of the passengers and crew of the Boeing 737.

Arab-Israeli conflict coming to an end – U.S. official

WASHINGTON (USIA) — The assassination of former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on Nov. 4 will not undermine the peace process as this process "will happen in phases, and transcends any individual act of violence." Deputy Special Middle East Coordinator at the State Department Aaren Miller said recently at a panel discussion at Georgetown University.

Speaking at the panel sponsored by the University's Centre for Contemporary Arab Studies, Mr. Miller termed Mr. Rabin's assassination as a "tremendous loss" because he "provided the politial cover, authority and clout, and he presided over a historical transitison."

The American diplomat outlined elements on which the Arab-Israeli peace process is based, namely:

— agreements that were not only "concluded and sustained," but "charged realities on the ground;"

— a "peace-making structure" or a "corporate peace process, sanctioned by the United Nations and all powers" which has roots;

— individuals "committee to make this process work... who have an impact;"

— a Rabin "legacy which is a legacy of rationality... that will be preserved;"

— "irreversibility" of the peace process — in short, the Arab-Israeli conflict "is coming to an end, but the question is how long...?"

Speaking of the United States' role in the process, Mr. Miller likened it to "a catalyst," adding, "that is why we have reason to be optimistic." He also underlined the importance of the various agreements between the Arabs and Israel and the "different rates and paces" of those agreements. Hence, "proress will be uneven and will vary."

Moreover, he stressed the phenomenon that there have been "direct negotiations and some of those were carried out without U.S. intervention," even though some "warranted U.S. involvement," he described Washington's role as "very-complex" but "we rise to the occasion in different ways." He added that the Clinton administration, like its predecessor, has the Mideast peace process as its top priority.

The Egyptian ambassador to the United States, two senior diplomats from Israel and Jordan, and the permanent observer of Palestine at the United Nations also took part in the panel "Prospects for the Middle East Peace Process."

Israel's deputy chief of mission, Shlomo Gur, declared that Israel is "willing and ready" to reach other agreements even before the coming Knesset elections scheduled late next year. He added that Rabin's legacy was one of peace, as that is what he "bequeathed us."

Egyptian Ambassador Ahmad Maher Al Sayed, who took part in the 1977 Camp David negoaitions, while extolling the virtues of Mr. Rabin, "who evolved from a soldier and a hard-line opponent of the PLO... to a man of peace," dwelt on the actions of extremists who are "bound on killing leaders and the peace process." The ambassador declared that extremism, fanaticism or terrorism is "one" and there is a need "to face up to militias." He noted that "verbal terrorism is dangerous" but added that "we can defeat (the enemies of peace) by being... firm and working diligently to implement the (peace) agreements."

Nasser Al Kidwa, the PLO's permanent representative, urged the United States to be "fully engaged" and, alluding to the recent temporary closing of the PLO Washington office due to the lapse of the Mideast Peace Facilitation Act, underlined the need for "a change in the attitudes of the Congress."

Jordan's charge d'affaires Ayman Amiry said that the Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty is a "living document" and will "serve to build confidence among the populace." He added that "we want (the peace with Israel) to be a warm peace," one that encourages people-to-people contact.

NEWS IN BRIEF

'Arafat, Jesus on cloud in Palestinian Christmas'

BETHLEHEM (AP) — Yasser Arafat and Jesus Christ could share an artificial cloud hovering over Manager Square during this year's first-ever Palestinian-run Christmas celebrations in Bethlehem, according to a proposal revealed Thursday. Majed Ishaq, a member of the committee organising the festivities, said the two figures would be projected by laser onto a machine-generated gas cloud visible hundreds of metres away. "It will look gigantic," said Mr. Ishaq. The proposal, put forward by three Palestinian companies sponsoring the events, could have trouble gaining final approval at a meeting later this week, however. "I did not approve such an idea," said Bethlehem Mayor Elias Freij, a Christian who as tourism minister in the autonomy government has veto power over such ideas.

Turkish newspaper wars turn ugly

ANKARA (AP) — A circulation war between Turkey's leading dailies churned up mud-slinging Thursday as they exchanged accusations of financial wrongdoing in front-page headlines. The best-selling dailies are all owned by two family-run companies that have engaged in a bitter circulation war over a year. Hurriyet and Milliyet, owned by Aydin Dogan, reserved full front pages Thursday to charges of an insurance fraud by Sabah, owned by Dinc Bilgin. Sabah's front page the same day carried accusations of wrongdoing during Mr. Dogan's purchase of a government bank earlier this year. Offering refrigerators, television sets, bicycles and other goods to lure customers into purchasing newspapers have become common practice in this country where the literacdy rate is around 70 per cent.

Lebanese man arrested on 255 charges

BEIRUT (R) — Police arrested a Lebanese man wanted on 255 charges, including drug dealing, theft and currency forgery, judicial sources said on Friday. "The number of arrest warrants issued against Atallah (Hafez Al Atri) is an all-time record in Lebanon's judicial history," a judicial source told Reuters. Twenty nine-year-old Atri was arrested Thursday night in the northern town of Miriya, the sources said. If convicted, he could face up to 15 yers in prison.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO
14:00 ..... Back to the Future
14:30 ... Harry and the Hendersons
15:00 ..... Blue Heelers
15:30 ..... Only in Hollywood
16:00 The Adventures of the Black Stallion
16:30 ..... Sky Trackers
17:00 Children's Programme: Fractales
17:30 Magazine — Omnisciences
18:00 Drama — C'est Mon Histoire
19:00 ..... Le Journal
19:15 Magazine — Faut Pas Rever
19:30 ..... News Headlines
19:35 ..... Major Dad
20:00 ..... The First Flights
20:25 The Bold And The Beautiful
21:10 ..... Star Trek
22:00 ..... News in English
22:25 Feature Film: "All Night Long"
23:50 L'Histoire Secrete Du Petrole
00:30 ..... My Good Friend

PRAYER TIMES

04:47 ..... Fajr
06:08 ..... (Sunrise) Duha
11:22 ..... Dhuhr
14:13 ..... 'Asr
16:37 ..... Maghreb
17:58 ..... 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swelleh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590.
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrasancta Church Tel: 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541.
Anglican Church Tel. 652826.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 652526.
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel: 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazarene Tel.675691.
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

Rainy, cloudy, and cold weather conditions will continue with winds northwesterly moderate becoming northeasterly in the evening. In Aqaba, skies will be partly cloudy, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.

Amman	1 / 10
Aqaba	9 / 18
Deserts	0/ 13
Jordan Valley	7 / 16

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 10, Aqaba 18 Humidity readings: Amman 97 per cent. Aqaba 70 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Ramzi Mzawi	894788
Dr. Khalil Abu Marjoub	779797
Dr. Awni Al Hawamdeh	832350
Dr. Khalil Al Tushq	757253
Firas pharmacy	661912
Ferdows pharmacy	778336
Al Ascma pharmacy	637055
Nairoukh pharmacy	623672
Al Salam pharmacy	636730
Yacoub pharmacy	644945
Shmeisani pharmacy	637660
Najib pharmacy	847632

IRBID:

Dr. Ali Al Omari	272032
Alquds pharmacy	(—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Amin Abul Rub	982393
Khalifeh pharmacy	985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre	637111
Civil Defence Department	661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue	630341
Civil Defence Emergency	199
Rescue Police	192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade	617101
Blood Bank	775121
Highway Police	843402
Traffic Police	896390
Public Security Department	630021
Hotel Complaints	605800
Price Complaints	661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints	897467
Amman Municipality Complaints	787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)	121
Overseas Calls	010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs	623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs	661101
Jordan Television	773111
Radio Jordan	774111
Water Authority	680100
Jordan Electricity Authority	815615
Electric Power Company	636381
RJ Flight Information	08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport	08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Hussein Medical Centre	813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn	644281/6
Akileh Maternity, J. Amn.	642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity	642362
Malhas, J. Amman	*636140*
Palestine, Shmeisani	607071
Shmeisani Hospital	669131
University Hospital	845845
Al-Muasher Hospital	667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali	666127/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali	664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen	777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh	775111/26
Army, Marka	891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital	602240/50
Amal Hospital	674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery	865199

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital	(09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital	(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital	(09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital	(09)990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital	(02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital	(02)272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital	(02)247100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital	(03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

05:00 ..... Aden (RJ)
05:40 ..... Jakarta, Singapore (RJ)
09:00 ..... Damascus (RJ)
09:00 ..... Aqaba (RJ)
09:30 ..... New Delhi (RJ)
09:55 ..... Karachi, Dubai (RJ)
10:00 ..... Beirut (RJ)
10:20 ..... Colombo (RJ)
14:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
16:20 ..... Cairo (RJ)
17:55 ..... London, Berlin (RJ)
19:30 ..... Jeddah (add) (RJ)
19:40 ..... Vienna (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

12:40 ..... Bahrain, Doha (GF)
14:20 ..... Rome (AZ)
15:00 ..... Vienna (OS)
18:15 ..... Dubai (EK)
20:10 ..... Beirut (ME)
22:00 ..... Larnaca (CY)
22:30 ..... Athens, Beirut (OA)
23:25 ..... Amsterdam (KL)
01:15 .... London, Damascus (BA)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

06:25 ..... Beirut (RJ)
06:30 ..... Aqaba (RJ)
11:00 ..... Vienna (RJ)
11:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
11:45 ..... Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
11:45 ..... Aqaba, Brussels (RJ)
11:50 ..... Paris (RJ)
12:00 ..... London (RJ)
12:15 ..... Cairo (RJ)
14:30 ..... Jeddah (add) (RJ)
20:00 ..... Riyadh, Dhahran (RJ)
20:10 ..... Larnaca (RJ)
20:15 ..... Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
21:00 ..... Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
23:00 ..... Jeddah (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

07:45 ..... Beirut (ME)
13:30 ..... Bahrain, Shariqah (GF)
15:20 ..... Rome (AZ)
15:50 ..... Vienna (OS)
19:15 ..... Dubai (EK)
22:55 ..... Larnaca (CY)
23:25 ..... Cairo (MS)
00:25 ..... Amsterdam (KL)
03:00 ..... Athens (OA)
03:00 ..... London (BA)

HIJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman	8:00 a.m. every Monday
Arr. Damascus	5:00 p.m. every Monday
Dep. Damascus	7:30 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman	5:00 p.m. every Sunday

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple	700/ 500
Banana	680
Banana (Mukammar)	620
Cabbage	120 / 80
Carrot	240/180
Cauliflower	180/120
Cucumbers (large)	200 / 120
Cucumbers (small)	370 / 300
Eggplant	160/ 100
Garlic	650/500
Grapes	650/500
Grape Fruit	200/150
Lemon	250/180
Marrow (large)	100/ 50
Marrow (small)	200 / 120
Olives (green)	700/500
Onion (green)	240/200
Onion (dry)	230/ 150
Orange	450/350
Pepper (hot)	160 / 100
Pepper (sweet)	180/120
Potato	270/ 180
Radish	130/80
Spinach	180/120
String Beans	700 / 500
Tangerine	250/180
Tomato	170/100

Regent urges cooperation to face common challenges at Barcelona summit

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan's participation in the Barcelona conference on Nov. 27 is expected to set up the Mid-East region's future cooperation in security and development through the common understanding and confrontation of challenges facing the Middle East and Europe, according to His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent.

Speaking after a meeting chaired by the Regent at the prime ministry Thursday to review preparations for the Kingdom's participation in the upcoming conference which will be attended by Middle Eastern and European nations, the Regent said business people and non-governmental organisations will be holding meetings on the sidelines of the conference in which Jordan will also take part.

Jordan enjoys the respect of various nations due to its moderate policies, its democracy, political pluralism and respect of human rights as well as its ongoing efforts towards reform, the Regent said.

Jordan will be presenting several working papers prepared by the private sector and will take part in the conference's discussions over technology, science and other subjects of concern to the country, Prince Hassan added.

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, chairs a meeting at the prime ministry Thursday to review preparations for Jordan's participation in the Barcelona conference (Petra photo)

Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker outlined the country's preparations saying that Jordan and the European Union have been holding close contacts over the preparations. He said that Jordan will be focusing on three dimensions in the Barcelona conference which are political security, economics and finance, and social and cultural development.

The prime minister said Jordan presented its proposals to the European Union and these will be included in the final declaration of the Barcelona conference. Sharif Zeid said these proposals relate to the region's economic partnership with Europe.

Prince Hassan stressed the importance of highlighting the achievements of the Amman economic summit and following up on decisions and recommendations made by delegations late last month.

The Jordanian delegation to the Barcelona conference will be led by Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti and will include the secretaries general of the ministries of planning and industry and trade, Jordan's ambassador to Belgium and Spain as well as representatives of several Jordanian ministries.

The Barcelona summit is expected to be attended by 12 Arab and Middle Eastern nations.

Earthquake aftershocks cause no injuries, damages, say officials

By Rana Husseini
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Several aftershocks registering between 3.2 and 4.7 on the Richter scale Friday were felt in Aqaba following two consecutive earthquakes on Wednesday and Thursday, officials said. No injuries or damages were reported, the sources said Friday.

The first aftershock was felt at 5:32 a.m. and registered 4.0 Friday in Aqaba; it was followed by eight aftershocks between 5:36 a.m.and 1.03 p.m., according to Director of Aqaba Civil Defence Department (CDD) Lieutenant Colonel Omar Tarawneh.

On Thursday, an earthquake lasting approximately 20 seconds and measuring from 5.3 (in Israel) to 5.1 (in Egypt), shook parts of the Middle East including Aqaba, but caused no injuries, according to news agency reports.

Lieut. Col. Tarawneh told the Jordan Times Friday that none of the aftershocks on Friday were felt by Aqaba residents and no damages to buildings or facilities or injuries were reported.

However, Lieut. Col. Tarawneh pointed out that slight damage occurred following the Thursday evening moderate earthquake at 8:15 p.m. which registered 5.17 on the Richter scale and caused panic among Aqaba residents. Again, no injuries were reported, he said.

"There were no major damages except a few cracks in the buildings that were already damaged from Wednesday's earthquake," the CDD official said.

He added that CDD units were on full alert during the past two days, and that the only major problem the department faced was Aqaba citizens' reactions after the Wednesday and Thursday quakes.

"People panicked and many were afraid to sleep in their homes Thursday. They wanted to sleep in the streets because of rumours which spread among citizens that a stronger earthquake was expected at any time," the official said.

Lieut. Col. Tarawneh said the situation returned to normal Friday, and "people were less frightened now, and they reported to work as usual."

His Majesty King Hussein on Wednesday telephoned His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, from England to check on the situation, the Crown Prince told reporters during an opening ceremony of a Yarmouk University faculty.

On Thursday Prime Minster Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, accompanied by other ministers and officials, visited Aqaba and checked the damaged areas.

According to Abdul Kader Emran, director of the Department of Earthquakes Studies at the Natural Resources Authority, the past three days witnessed a series of smaller earthquakes in the Gulf of Aqaba before the major quake on Wednesday.

"A group of active earthquakes increased and decreased at different times in strength until the major quake occurred," Mr. Emran said.

He said the earthquake caused instability to the geological structure of the Aqaba area.

"Faults and ruptures affected the area as a result, causing relative displacement, which in turn caused a series of small, unnoticeable earthquakes, which will continue to take place in the Aqaba region," he added.

He said these earthquakes will continue to hit the southern part of Aqaba, and "hopefully they will not be felt and will most probably end one month from now."

Meanwhile, an official at the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities Friday confirmed that the earthquake did not disturb the tourism season particularly in Aqaba.

"None of the foreign tourists who are currently in Aqaba hotels were injured in Wednesday's or Thursday's earthquakes," a statement from the ministry said.

The statement added that some destruction occurred to two hotels in Aqaba, and that they were under repair. None of the tourist attractions in the Kingdom were affected by the quake, the statement said.

In addition, the statement said that Aqaba International Airport and the port were operating as usual.

The aftershocks came two days after a powerful earthquake shook the Middle East from Lebanon to the borders of Sudan Wednesday, measuring up to 7.1 on the Richter scale.

Queen praises efforts of sectors in preservation of ancient site

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor has sent letters of appreciation to Minister of Water and Irrigation Saleh Irsheidat, Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Abdul Ilah Khatib and Ghazi Bisheh, director general of the Department of Antiquities for their efforts and those of their staff in conserving Jordan's national cultural heritage and the antiquities found at Tabaqat Fahl (Pella) in the Irbid governorate.

Cooperation between government departments in the implementation of a water project for the Irbid region close to Pella has guaranteed the preservation of the archaeological site, the Queen said.

She stressed the importance of strengthening relations between private and public sectors especially where the protection of the environment and preserving the country's archaeological treasures were concerned.

The water project originally included the construction of four water pools and several other concrete structures in the central Wadi Jirm valley as well as fencing off the entire central wadi, according to Rami Khouri, president of the Friends of Archaeology Society (FoA).

Mr. Khouri said the FoA had grave concerns that the project would have negative environmental impact on the archaeological site. Earlier this month the society initiated contacts with the appropriate authorities; and several meetings later an alternative plan was endorsed, Mr. Khouri said.

The new plan entailed building underground water works. This solution was practical, cost-effective and satisfied all concerned parties, according to Mr. Khouri.

The FoA board was following up the positive result with a proposal to establish a formal system through which all construction projects in Jordan at or near archaeology sites be reviewed in a public meeting during the design stage, well before the stage of construction.

Envoy to lay foundation stone for new embassy premises

AMMAN (J.T.) — Lebanese Ambassador to Jordan William Habib has said he will lay the foundation stone for the permanent site of the Lebanese embassy in the Abdoun district in the next few days.

Mr. Habib said he hoped the new premises will be better placed to offer services to the public.

The embassy will be set up on 1,500 square metres and work on the project is expected to take one year, according to the ambassador in a statement to the Jordan Times.

Speaking on Lebanon's national day, the ambassador said that Jordanian-Lebanese relations in cultural, economic, social and trade affairs were progressing.

Mr. Habib said that during 1995 Jordan and Lebanon signed transport and agriculture agreements to promote these relations and that Jordan plans to organise an industrial fair in Beirut in March of 1996 and that this will be preceded by a similar Lebanese fair in Jordan.

The Jordanian fair will display the country's manufactured products which will be offered for sale to the Lebanese public, the ambassador said.

Jordanian industrialists have lately increased their contacts with the Beirut business community and it is hoped that the coming year will witness a flurry of bilateral activities between the two countries, Mr. Habib said.

Mr. Habib said existing relations between Beirut and Amman can be described as close and historic and that the Lebanese people cherish deep love and respect for his Majesty King Hussein and are proud of their relations with the Jordanian people.

The Jordanian-Lebanese association which was receently established in Amman is bound to help bolster bilateral relations, he said.

The association includes Her Royal Highness Princess Ghida, Talal and Senator Laila Sharaf as well as prominent Jordanian personalities.

Queen names Royal Mail train in London

LONDON (J.T.) — As President of the United World Colleges (UWC), Her Majesty Queen Noor Thursday bestowed the name of "Atlantic College" on a Royal Mail train at Victoria Station in London in recognition by British Railways of UWC's work "both in the United Kingdom and around the world towards the ideals of internationalism and service to others," according to Royal Court statement.

In her remarks, Queen Noor compared the network of intersecting and interconnected railroads with the UWC alumni who "criss-cross the globe, creating new networks of peace and solidarity."

She praised the "dynamic and inspiring leadership" of the UWC's first two Presidents, the late Lord Mountbatten and the Prince of Wales as well as the founders of the UWC who have created a global "humanist vision," the statement said.

The Chair of the Governing Body of Atlantic College Lady Prior commended Queen Noor's "dedication to international understanding through education" saying that she will "make a difference" as the new President of the UWC.

The Managing Director of Rail Express Systems Charles Belcher commended the UWC's educational system, which is "well adapted to today's environment and demands," the statement said.

Atlantic College, which was founded in 1962 in Wales, is the first of the nine UWCs located in Swaziland, Italy, Canada, Singapore, Venezuela, USA, Hong Kong, Norway and next year in India, where students are selected from the throughout the world based on merit and the majority are awarded scholarships. Most of the students study for the International baccalaureate degree, a pre-university qualification, with the exception of the Simon Bolivar College in Venezuela, which offers a three-year diploma course in farm management and rural development, according to the statement.

The Atlantic College, like all UWCs, emphasises diverse community service programmes within its educational curriculum that range from providing coastguard and lifeguard services to running the college's and children's farms as well as developing a woodland ecology project.

The Atlantic College currently enrolls 350 students from 70 countries including Jordan and has graduated 17 Jordanians since its inception.

Attending the ceremony with Queen Noor were two Jordanian students at the Atlantic College, Razem Mais and Linda Maloul, the statement said.

'Media unfair in coverage of medical malpractice cases'

By Lola Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN— The media has fallen short in its coverage of cases of medical malpractice, concentrating on scandals and promotional headlines which are prejudiced and inaccurate, doctors complained Thursday.

In a seminar entitled "Medical Malpractice; The Negative Effects of Bad Media Coverage," held and organised by the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Jordan, doctors and journalists were locked in a discussion on the media's right to publish stories about cases of alleged medical malpractice without the courts final ruling in such cases.

Doctors stressed that inaccurate information badly affects the reputation of Jordanian doctors, especially during this period were the country is projecting itself as the regions medical centre, said Tawfiq Lobani, secretary general of the Jordanian Medical Council.

Complaing of alleged inaccuricies in the print media, Farah Ghassan, of the Faculty of Madicine accused newspapers of "never correcting the information they print."

"Once the court finds the doctor innocent, newspapers do not publish the news," Dr. Farah added.

One the other hand, media people stressed that although they are unfamiliar with medical terminology, they do not publish a story without obtaining facts and supporting documents.

"Media, the fourth authority, has the right to publish cases of medical malpractice as long as the complaint they receive is documented," said Riyad Huroub, publisher of Shihan Arabic weekly.

Dr. Huroub added that newspapers could be taken to court if they publish incorrect information.

In the last 10 years 100 medical malpractice cases were published in Jordanian newspapers, out of which five doctors complained to the newspaper by telephone, and one doctor took the newspaper to court, said Dr. Huroub.

As a result of tribal traditions and peoples' belief in fate, doctors are rarely taken to court, said Dr. Huroub, therefore, he added, newspapers are the only place where citizens can express their anger.

Mohammed Masalha, of the Faculty of Law at the University of Jordan, said that the law has already regulated the relationship between the media and reporting on medical malpractice, but he stressed that the media should work harder to provide balanced reporting.

Temperatures likely to drop before rising by end of week

AMMAN (J.T.) — The cold air pressure which has affected the country over the past two days causing a sharp drop in temperature and rainfall in various parts of the country, will recede as of Saturday afternoon, according to meteorology department sources. The sources said rainfall will stop in the evening and temperatures will rise to 11°/12° centigrades during the day. Frost formation late Saturday night and Sunday morning is likely to occur when temperatures will drop to 1°C. The weather will continue to be cold and dry and temperatures will range between 11°C and 12°C during the day dropping to 1°C or zero at night, the sources said.

A rise in temperatures is expected on Wednesday and Thursday with temperatures forecast to reach 16°C.

NEWS IN BRIEF

King confers medal on outgoing envoy

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein has conferred upon the Ambassador of the Commonwealth of Australia in Amman, Jonathan Sheppard, Jordan's Independence Medal of the First Order on the occasion of the end of his tour of duty in Jordan. Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti presented the medal to Mr. Sheppard during a dinner he hosted in honour of the ambassador.

Pharmacists conference starts in Damascus

AMMAN (Petra) — A total of 170 pharmacists will today take part in the 22nd Arab Pharmacists Union (APU) conference which starts in Damascus today, according to Abdul Rahim Issa, President of the Jordanian Pharmacists Association (JPA). Mr. Issa said the Jordanian pharmacist delegation will present several working papers to the week-long conference. The papers deal with methods to improve pharmacist performance and encourage pharmaceutical education in the Arab World.

Minister returns after visit to Saudi Arabia

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdul Salam Abbadi returned home Friday after a several-day visit to Saudi Arabia during which he held talks with his Saudi counterpart Mahmoud Ben Sifr on preparations for next year's pilgrimage season. In an arrival statement, Dr. Abbadi said his talks with Dr. Ben Sifr covered such areas as granting visas to Jordanians pilgrims to Mecca, and housing arrangements for them in Mina, Mecca and Mount Arafat, in addition to the improvement of services to pilgrims.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILM

* "Los Hijos Del Capitan Grant" (for children) at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman at 5.00 p.m.

* "Die Mörder Sind Under Uns" at Goethe-Institut at 8.00 p.m. (with subtitles in English).

SHORT STORY RECITAL

* Short story recital by Rasmi Abu Ali at the Phoenix Gallery, Gardens Street at 6.00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Annual fall exhibition "Khawater" at the Jordan River Designs, (Tel. 613081/2) until Dec. 1.

* "Pakistani Women of Substance in paintings and photographs" at the National Gallery of Fine Arts, Jabal Weibdeh.

*Exhibition of stamps about the Royal Hashemite family (1916-1995) at the Royal Cultural Centre.

* Works by Jordanian and Iraqi artists at Orfali Art Gallery.

*Works by Dodi Taba'a entitled "Variations Graphiques 93-95" at the French Cultural Centre.

*Sculptures & paintings by Iraqi Artist Ismail Fattah, and a retrospective exhibition of sculptures & drawings by Mona Saudi at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh

*Metal works by Ammar Khammash at Liwan, off Wadi Saqra Street. Also displaying all kinds of handicrafts. (Tel. 699141).

Former S. Korean leaders face punishment for Kwangju killings

SEOUL (Agencies) — South Korean President Kim Young-Sam has ordered his ruling party to draft a special law to punish his two predecessors for brutally suppressing a 1980 civil uprising, a top party official said Friday.

Kang Sam-Jae, secretary general of Mr Kim's Democratic Liberal Party, said Mr. Kim told him the military crackdown on the revolt had "tarnished the honour of the country and the people and immensely damaged the nation's pride."

The pro-democracy uprising in the southwestern city of Kwangju followed a 1979 coup by army generals Chun Doo Hwan and Roh Tae-Woo, who both served terms as head of state.

About 200 people were killed in the crackdown in May 1980, officially. Kwangju residents say the real toll was higher.

Mr. Kang told a televised news conference Mr. Kim wanted the party to pass the special law in the National Assembly session that ends next month.

Mr. Kim told Mr. Kang a special law was "necessary to deal with the responsible people who caused sufferings and sorrow of the people by staging a coup."

Asked if Mr. Chun and Mr. Roh, who were army strongmen at the time of the uprising, were among those reponsible, Mr. Kang said: "I believe they are included. They will be subject to the law."

Mr. Roh is already under custody on bribery charges in connection with a $654 million slush fund which he said he amassed during his 1988-93 presidency.

"I will make the special legislation an opportunity to demonstrate to the people that justice, truth and the law exist in this land," Mr. Kang quoted Mr. Kim as saying.

After a decision last July by prosecutors not to indict Mr. Chun and Mr. Roh over the crackdown, opposition parties and civil rights groups have demanded the punishment of Mr. Chun and Mr. Roh for leading the military action.

Student activists have staged street protests across the country in recent months to demand Mr. Kim's resignation for failing to punish Mr. Chun and Mr. Roh.

Seoul prosecutors, in a much-awaited report on their year-long investigation into lawsuits filed against Mr. Chun, Mr. Roh and 56 others on insurrection charges, said in July they would not charge these people with any offence.

Their report said that although excessive army suppression of the Kwangju revolt had resulted in huge human losses, no evidence was found that the military rulers had deliberately plotted to cause the incident to consolidate their power.

It said the actions were designed to settle a national crisis and were based on prevailing martial law at the time.

The 10-day revolt erupted on May 18, 1980, after marital law had been clamped on all South Korea the previous day.

The main opposition party, National Congress for New Politics, welcomed Mr. Kim's order to draft the special law.

But it also said that independent special prosecutors must be named to look into the Kwangju case.

"We will make our utmost efforts to enact the special law and the introduction of a system allowing special prosecutors," opposition party spokesman Park Ji-Won said.

Meanwhile, prosecutors Friday expanded a probe of ex-President Roh's corruption scandal to a massive military procurement project, including purchases of weapons from abroad, prosecution sources said.

Senior Prosecutor Ahn Kang-Min said in a briefing that the proseuction had secured documents of the 1993 audit results of the controversial Yulgok Programme, which then led to the arrest of several top military leaders.

"The probe of Yulgok Programme will continue even after Mr. Roh is indicted," an event expected to take place before Dec. 5, Mr. Ahn said, indicating that the probe of the multi-billion-dollar programme was in full-swing.

The probe is expected to focus on projects which were signed during Mr. Roh's tenure from early 1988 to early 1993.

They include the procurement of 120 F-16 jet fighters and anti-submarine aircraft from overseas suppliers and programmes to jointly develop helicopters and naval destroyers with foreign partners.

South Korea reversed an earlier decision to buy F-18s from McDonnell Douglas and settled on F-16s of General Dynamics, allegedly in return for a kickback which was funnelled to Mr. Roh's suspect secret Swiss bank accounts.

Mr. Roh and General Dynamics have denied the allegations.

Local press reports said that proseuctors planned to indict 24 South Korean tycoons for contributing Mr. Roh's $650 million slush fund.

Yonhap News Agency said, however, that none of the 24 would be arrested on bribery charges because of a feared adverse impact on the economy, news which sent the stock market soaring 1.2 per cent.

The list of tycoons accused of bribing Mr. Roh included the heads of the giant Samsung, Hyundai, Daewoo, LG and Hanjin groups, the respected Dong-A Daily and other major dailies said.

Others in the published list included the Dong Ah, Lotte, Jinro, Ssayong, Hanbo, Daelim, Hyosung, Kum Ho, Dong Bu, Daenong, Hanil groups, Dongkuk Steel Mill, Sambu Construction and the Kia, Miwon, Kohap, Dososan, Tongyang and Poongsan groups.

Another five companies were accused of having bribed Mr. Roh, but the statute of limitations on bribery cases had expired in their case and they would not face indictment, the largest circulation Chosun Daily said.

The five were named as the Sunkyong, Kukdong, Kolon, Haitai and Pacific groups.

The 29 conglomerates had given Mr. Roh some $313 million, the newspapers said.

Friday's reports were the first saying a decision to prosecute had been taken, although lists of the amounts the companies had allegedly paid to Mr. Roh already been published.

The mother of a six-year-old girl shot during an argument between a Haitian policeman and a truck driver cries over the body of her daughter in the Port-Au-Prince slum of Cite Soleil. The girl was shot when the policeman fired at the driver and missed hitting the girl (AFP photo)

4 killed in Haitian slum riots

PORT-AU-PRINCE (R) — At least four people were killed in violent clashes that broke out in Haiti's worst slum Thursday after police shot dead a six-year-old child, officials, witnesses and local radio reports said.

Angry slum dwellers disarmed policemen, ransacked a police station and fired at police after an officer shot at a bus and accidentally killed the child, a police spokesman said.

Residents of Cite Soleil, a sprawling slum of 200,000 people, set up barricades of burning tyres to stop cars entering and demanded that President Jean-Bertrand Aristide go to the slum to listen to them, eyewitnesses said.

"There was an incident between a Haitian National Police officer and a bus driver," said Jean Yonel Trecile, spokesman for Haiti's Interim Police Force.

"The officer fired a shot during the altercation that killed a six-year-old girl and that set off the community."

Mr. Trecile could not confirm the exact death toll but he said three policemen were wounded by bullets and flying rocks.

The riot broke out as Mr. Aristide met with President Bill Clinton's National Security advisor Anthony Lake for talks that were expected to address upcoming presidential elections and civil unrest that left seven dead last week.

The slum dwellers clashed with the Haitian National Police, a new police force set up after democracy was restored in Haiti last year with the help of U.S. troops.

The fragile new force has received only four months of training and has been charged with using excessive force in a series of recent shootings.

The force is expected eventually to number 5,000 members and to assume full responsibility for Haiti's security after United Nations troops end a peacekeeping mission in February.

Officials said U.N.-peacekeepers were sent into the slum to restore order and members of the discredited Interim Police Force, made up of members of the previous military regime, were sent in to evacuate the besieged national policemen.

The Interim Police Force took over the police station, and its spkesman said shooting had stopped and there was a "tense calm" in the slum.

But the child's body was still lying in the street covered by a sheet hours after the shooting took place because slum dwellers refused to allow an ambulance to enter.

They wanted Mr. Aristide to go to the slum to see what the police had done.

The violence added to growing tension created in Haiti by uncertainty over the Dec. 17 presidential election.

Aristide supportes want the election cancelled to allow Mr. Aristide to serve another three years, making up for the time he spent in exile after his ouster by the military in 1991.

The Princess of Wales (left) meets Pedro Montenegro, 12, at the Garrahan Hospital in a suburb of Buenos Aires during her visit. Pedro is recovering from a brain operation. Princess Diana is on a four-day visit to Argentina (AFP photo)

Diana tests envoy role with Menem

BUENOS AIRES (R) — Britain's Princess Diana will put her new ambassadorial skills to the test Friday when she meets Argentine President Carlos Menem to try to nourish relations between the two former Falklands war rivals.

Following an adultery confession on British television, the 34-year-old princess grabbed the spotlight Thursday at the start of a four-day visit, charming sceptical Argentines with her good looks and soft manner in several charity events.

Mr. Menem, whose own private life is at least as colourful as Princess Diana's, was likely to be equally disarmed by the princess.

Princess Diana made a rousing debut in her new chosen role as Britain's goodwill ambassador, visiting three centres for the disabled just 72 hours after admitting on BBC Television that she had had a love affair when her marriage was reeling.

Argentines previously cool towards Princess Diana, whom they considered just a pretty face in an irrelevant monarchy, warmed to her when they saw her smiling and chatting with crippled children and the elderly.

Typically fashion-conscious women complimented her on her trim figure in a short, sleeveless white dress, and one television commentator remarked, "it's hard to imagine she ever had an eating disorder."

But lunch on Friday with Mr. Menem was expected to be the acid test. Argentina still bears the scars of the 1992 Falklands war, in which 800 of its soldiers died, and it still campaigns for sovereignty over the barren South Atlantic islands.

Many people who did not write off Princess Diana's trip in advance said they hoped it would help heal the wounds of the war.

But Falklands veterans were annoyed at "all this publicity for a royal family that is not very royal, and not much of a family," their leader, Victor Meneses, said.

Despite the heavy political slant of their meeting Friday, Mr. Menem was likely to prove an easy target for peacemaker Diana.

The flamboyant president's own stormy separation five years ago was followed by divorce last year and capped recently by the news that he has an illegitimate child.

Princess Diana's visit comes on the heels of a meeting between Mr. Menem and British Prime Minister John Major this month in New York, which symbolised the relaxing of bilateral ties.

Britain and Argentina also agreed on oil exploration in the Falklands this year, and Mr. Menem hosted a visit by Princess Diana's brother-in-law, Prince Andrew, in 1994.

Princess Diana's schedule takes her Friday to two more hospitals and to the British Benevolence Society.

But a charity dinner she sponsored later Friday had not yet sold out, showing that Argentines were not overly enthusiastic.

The Welsh community in windswept Patagonia, where she goes whale-watching and takes tea Saturday, poses another challenge, promising to treat Princess Diana "like just another tourist."

Meanwhile, seven out of 10 Britons polled by the London's biggest tabloid said Princess Diana has been badly treated by the royal family.

Sixty-one per cent of those asked in the Sun newspaper poll said Princess Diana and her estranged husband, heir-to-the-throne Prince Charles, should get a divorce.

Asked for their reaction to Princess Diana's brutally frank television interview Monday, the overwhelming majority said she emerged as caring, thoughtful, lonely, sad and honest.

Princess Diana not only admitted to having had a love affair but said she did not know how Prince Charles would handle being king and accused the royal family of treating her like an enemy.

The princess said she wanted to become a "queen of hearts" ambassador for Britain, a role she is now playing on a visit to Argentina.

TheSun poll, conducted by Mori and published in its Friday edition, showed that 78 per cent felt she would do a good job as a world ambassador for Britain.

Mahathir appeals for smooth power transition

KUALA LUMPUR (R) — Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad appealed Friday for a smooth transition of power in his United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) after his deputy promised not to challenge him for the top post.

"I'm 70 years old now. Definitely there'll come a time, not far away, when a new leader is needed for this party," Mr. Mahathir said when launching the annual convention of his powerful UMNO party.

"It is my intention to see the change does not bring any calamity," he said.

UMNO, Malaysia's largest political party with some 2.4 million ethnic Malay members, is the lynchpin of the National Front coalition government.

The party president has always been the prime minister and Mr. Mahathir has held the post for 14 years.

But talk has circulated in the party since last year that Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim — who is also UMNO's deputy president — will challenge Mr. Mahathir for the presidency in UMNO's triennial elections next year.

The rumours, also printed in the local and foreign press, were so widespread that Mr. Anwar was compelled to deny them altogether Thursday, saying his loyalty to Mr. Mahathir should not be questioned.

He also accused the foreign media of playing up the issue and said no one should nominate him for the presidency next year.

Mr. Mahathir expressed his gratitude to Mr. Anwar Friday and echoed his sentiments that foreigners "stop trying to destabilise UMNO and the country with this issue."

"It is my wish to hand over to my successor a party that is strong, united and dynamic," Mr. Mahathir said. "And in the tradition of UMNO, the successor to the president is the deputy president."

Political analysts said the succession issue in UMNO had become sensationalised during Mr. Mahathir's tenure because of the political demise of two of his previous deputies who had appeared to be just as likely as Mr. Anwar to succeed.

U.N. to feed Rwanda's exiled army

PANZI CAMP, Zaire (R) — The U.N. refugee agency (UNHCR) has begun an operation to register and feed some 14,000 soldiers of Rwanda's former Hutu army and their families camping in eastern Zaire.

But many of the men in Panzi, part of the Hutu army that helped carry out last year's genocide in Rwanda, refuse to accept UNHCR's condition for registeration — that they first denounce their military status.

The UNHCR long refused to assist the 8,000 former soldiers camped at Panzi with their families and those at the nearby Bulonge military camp, home to 6,000 ex-soldiers, leaving the task to another relief agency, Caritas.

But now it has been forced to do the job after Caritas pulled out this month following Rwandan government criticism that it is feeding Hutus responsible for the slaughter of up to a million Tutsis and moderate Hutus in 1994.

The scene at Panzi camp, located in a valley facing the lush hills of Rwanda across the Ruzizi River, was one of chaos when U.N. officials arrived this week to register the residents.

Many men of fighting age refused to be photographed by reporters, apparently fearing they may be recognised in Rwanda for their actions during the genocide.

"You cockroach," shouted a Hutu ex-soldier at a visitor. "You're a spy from Rwanda. Get out of here." Hundreds of young men gathered around the visitor, waving their arms menacingly.

Patrick De Sousa, head of UNHCR in Zaire's border town of Bukavu, said his agency agreed to help Panzi and Bulonge on the condition that the ex-soldiers denounce their military status.

"Someone must feed these soldiers or they'll starve," he said. "Zairean government tells us 'we're stuck, you feed them.' Caritas doesn't feed them. We're forced to do our humanitarian mandate. There has to be a political solution."

Tense U.N. officials waited behind Zairean soldiers as the crowd in Panzi went wild when asked to denounce their military status and sign statements. Only a few dozen men signed up.

Soldiers in the two camps are part of an estimated 40,000 members of the former Rwandan army who fled — along with two million Hutu refugees — to Zaire and Tanzania after Tutsi-led rebels seized power and ended 1994's ethnic slaughter.

The issue of feeding the Hutu army in exile is the latest dilemma facing the international community in a region where the United Nations and other agencies have had mandates stretched beyond limits during the 16-month-old refugee crisis.

As the West turns its back on the far-off Hutu-Tutsi ethnic conflict, UNHCR has almost become a government for refugees. It coordinates 100 non-governmental organisations and even controls the camp police, paying Zairean soldiers $2 a day.

Panzi and Bulonge camps are a security threat to Rwanda's Tutsi-led army fighting an insurgency from Zaire. This month, its troops killed hundreds of rebels on a tiny island on Lake Kivu on the Rwandan side of the border near Bukavu.

Southwestern Rwanda is hit by rebels crossing into villages sitting on the tip of a peninsula jutting into Lake Kivu.

Zaire denies Rwandan charges it is aiding the ex-soldiers, but Western aid workers say Zairean military officers in Bukavu are hands-in-gloves with senior Hutu army officers in exile.

Kashmir hostages' relative renew appeal

NEW DELHI (R) — The relatives of four Westerners held hostage in Kashmir since early July renewed their appeal to the guerrilla captors Friday to free them without further delay.

"We do not understand why you still hold our innocent relatives hostage," the relatives said in an appeal to the shadowy Al Faran group.

Al Faran had warned the Indian government Thursday that it would soon regret its actions if it did not meet the organisation's demands and release a group of 15 jailed Kashmiri separatists in return for the release of the hostages.

"Our governments have said that they will make no concessions to those who hold their citizens hostage and that they will not urge other governments to make concessions," said the statement from the relatives released through the British High Commission in New Delhi.

The four hostages, American Donald Hutchings, Britons Paul Wells and Keith Mangan and German Dirk Hasert, were abducted while on a trekking holiday in Kashmir.

A fifth captive, Norwegian Hans Christian Ostroe, was found beheaded on Aug. 13.

"You are punishing them and us for something that is out of our control," the relatives' statement said.

"We urge you to recognise that you will gain nothing for yourselves or your cause by continuing to hold them, as you must have seen over the past four long months."

Official Indian sources said the guerrillas made their unspecified threats in a 10-minute exchange with negotiators by telephone or radio Thursday afternoon.

The kidnappers asked for a radio and said they would contact the authorities again Saturday.

Indian authorities have been in regular touch with the guerrillas since Nov. 9, when contact was re-established after a break of more than 50 days.

Al Faran sent a handwritten statement Thursday to some newspapers in Kashmir's main city Srinagar to deny it was bargaining for the release of Maulana Masood Azhar, a leader of the Pakistan-based militant group Harkat-Ul-Ansar.

India accuses Pakistan of arming and directing the guerrillas, whose five-year separatist insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir state has cost some 20,000 lives. Pakistan says it gives only moral support.

Indian officials had hoped that an offer to bring Azhar to trial might buy freedom for American hostage Hutchings, who is said to be critically ill with frostbite.

The relatives of the hostages, who returned to the West recently after spending months at the British High Commission in Delhi awaiting developments, said they were grateful to Al-Faran for arranging medical treatment from time to time for the captives.

"This has shown your compassion and honour. It also shows that you recognise, as we do, that you alone are responsible for their continued well-being and safety," they said.

"It has been in your power to let them go at any time. Please now show the strength of your humanity once and for all by releasing them now," the statement concluded.

Michael Jackson gets MTV Euro award

PARIS (R) — American Michael Jackson was voted best male singer and Iceland's Bjrok took the female vocalist prize at the MTV-Europe Music Awards in Paris. Take That of Britain won the live performance award. Dog Eat Dog of the United States received a prize for best newcomer and U2 of Ireland was the best group. The Cranberries of Irleand walked away with best song for Zombie while American group on Bon Jovi won the rock group award and East 17 of Britain was top dance group.

Hot dog diverts jumbo

LONDON (R) — A British Airways captain diverted a Jumbo Jet 1,600 kilometres to save a tiny dog from overheating after 200 passengers gave him the go-ahead. Captain Rex Graveley spotted that a heater was stuck on full blast in the hold where a miniature Shitzu dog called Louise was flying from Houston to London last May. Capt. Graveley announced the problem over the plane's public address system and the passengers overwhelmingly voted for him to divert the plane to Boston — at a cost of £20,000 ($31,000). Capt. Graveley was this week awarded a plaque by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Venezuelan politician plans helicopter plunge

CARACAS (R) — A flamboyant Venezuelan politician plans to round off an offbeat election campaign by bungee-jumping out of a speeding helicopter to show voters his bravery. Pedro Mosqueda, 40, a candidate for mayor in Dec. 3 local elections in Maracay, said the stunt would show he has what it takes to run the provincial city 80 kilometres west of Caracas. "I want to prove with my actions that I am capable of dying for Maracay," Mr. Mosqueda said. The former textile worker plans to drop more than 40 metres from a helicopter flying at about 60 miles per hour (100 kilometres per hour).

Thais arrest 7 foreign prostitutes

BANGKOK (AFP) — Thai authorities Friday announced the arrest of seven foreign women — from Ukraine, Chechenya and Denmark — on charges of prostitution. The women, aged 19 to 23, would be deported with 249 other illegal immigrants within the next two days, immigration police officials said. The seven were arrested Thursday night at a cocktail lounge, where authorities confiscated a supply of condoms and the women's datebooks, police Lieutenant General Kiatisak Prapawat said. Most entered Thailand on three-month tourist visas, he said. He noted a rise in arrivals of foreign prostitutes, particularly from the former Soviet Union where political collapse has triggered economic hardship. One was from Denmark, five from Ukraine and one from Chechenya, he said. They charged 6,000 baht ($240) per encounter and offered a free session after five were paid. Of the illegal immigrants facing deportation, 180 were Burmese, 49 Chinese and 20 Laotian, officials said.

Elephants wreaks havoc en route to game park

NAIROBI (AFP) — A herd of more than 200 elephants is wreaking havoc after diverting from a migratory route to the Masai Mara Game Park to devastate a town in southwest Kenya, the daily The Nation reported Friday. In groups of around 20, they have destroyed several compounds, particularly around schools and churches, forcing residents to barricade themselves indoors, according to its reporter in Narok, 140 kilometres (80 miles) west of Nairobi. Robert Kui, a local official responsible for wildlife, said the movement of elephants was common for this time of year as they crossed the Masai region to reach the game reserve southwest of the capital. The Kenya Wildlife Service said it had sent a team of experts to the area on Thursday to find out where the elephants came from and why, contrary to normal, they were rampaging through Narok.

Anti-riot police and ex-combatants clash outside a government office in San Salvador after the police stormed the building to free 27 hostages. The ex-combatants had taken the building to demand pensions and other payments promised to them in the 1994 peace accord ending 12 years of civil war. Ten hostages had been released before troops entered the building (AFP photo)

1 killed after police storm building in El Salvador

SAN SALVADOR (AFP) — One person was killed, 24 injured and more than 100 arrested after police stormed a government building Thursday and freed hostages held by some 300 disgruntled ex-soldiers, officials said.

Riot police fired tear gas and freed the 27 remaining hostages held by the soldiers, most of them disabled ex-guerillas and government servicemen who were protesting a lack of financial help pledged at the end of the country's 11-year civil war.

A former government serviceman identified as Rene Antonion Pineda, 27, died in the hospital after sustaining a gunshot wound to the chest, medical authorities said.

Police stormed the building occupied by the soldiers and introduced tear gas. The police then beat many of the detained combatants with clubs and pushed them into buses headed for the central jail.

Police freed the 27 remaining hostages. Ten had already been released by the soldiers. Among those injured were three children and an undetermined number of the employees held by the soldiers.

The ex-combatants, nearly all of them crippled, were demanding pensions and other payments pledged in peace accords signed by the government and the opposition Farabundo Marti Front for National Liberation (FMLN) in January 1992.

The soldiers, from both the government and the FMLN, took over two floors that contain the office of the Fund for the Protection of Disabled and Incapacitated War Veterans.

They were accompanied by women and elderly who also complained about the government's cancellation of pensions and other payments contemplated in the peace agreement.

One of the elderly men that participated in the protest told reporters that the disturbances occurred "right when we were on the verge of an agreement to end the seizure."

Earlier, one of the ex-combatants said: "We took the building for the same reasons as always — we are not being taken care of, the government has pulled off a farce," one of the former soldiers said earlier.

Tight finish seen in Irish divorce poll

DUBLIN (R) — Ireland voted Friday in a knife-edge referendum to change its Catholic constitution and end a 70-year-old ban on divorce.

Opinion polls show the country evenly split between opponents of a major break with traditional Irish family values and supporters of a move towards more liberal European trends.

The outcome of the vote, expected around midday Saturday, is seen depending on how a small minority of don't knows vote after a month of often bitter campaigning.

The referendum is viewed as a test of how liberal Ireland has become after a decade in which the Roman Catholic Church's influence has dwindled and church attendance has fallen.

President Mary Robinson, the liberal guardian of the constitution, was among the first to cast her vote in what was expected to be a major turnout across the nation.

Mrs. Robinson, probably the most popular figure in Irish politics, is supposed to be neutral in affairs of state but was the target of attack by the church-backed "no" lobby which felt she tacitly backed the "yes" vote.

She told a U.S. television channel that a great deal had changed for the better in family law since Ireland last voted in 1986 in a similar referendum which was defeated by 2-1.

This was seen by her opponents as a reference to a series of bills to underpin the equitable shareout of property among separated couples and was taken to mean she supported divorce.

Prime Minister John Bruton and his deputy, Foreign Minister Dick Spring, were also among early voters. Both have campaigned loudly for a "yes" vote saying the nation must give the separated and estranged a second chance in life.

The government and opposition are backing the "yes" vote. Mr. Bruton has suggested it is in tune with moves to end the division of Ireland by reassuring Northern Ireland's Protestant majority that Irish laws are the same as their British ones.

Voting intentions in the referendum appear to have followed the 1986 vote when a 60 per cent majority for was whittled away by a vigorous campaign against allowing people to remarry.

The Roman Catholic hierarchy, backed by the Vatican, has been at the forefront of appeals against tampering with either the constitution or the institution of marriage.

The All-Ireland Primate, Cardinal Cahal Daly, said that the legalisation of divorce would wreck families and most likely encourage unhappy couples to split, damaging their offspring.

Both sides have fired bewildering salvoes of statistics about the effects of divorce at a puzzled electorate, including figures purporting to show that it will hit the taxpayer.

The government was forced to get a ruling from the attorney-general to refute charges that families from a first marriage would lose their constitutional rights by divorce.

Moscow parcel sparks Chechen-raid fear

MOSCOW (R) — Russia's federal security service (FSB) said Friday it was investigating a mystery radioactive package found in a Moscow park that has sparked fears of Chechen guerrilla attacks in the capital.

The package was discovered by NTV independent television Thursday buried under snow in Izmailovo Park in the northeast of the city.

NTV linked it to claims by Chechen rebels that radioactive substances had been planted at various locations in Russia and could be used as a weapon in their fight for independence.

Interior Minister Anatoly Kulikov said that the package — believed to contain radioactive caesium — represented no danger.

A Defence Ministry expert told ITAR-TASS news agency that the package would have to be blown up for it to cause any significant contamination.

"The FSB is carrying out a thorough investigation of the incident," Interfax News Agency said.

It quoted NTV President Igor Malashenko as saying the station's correspondent Yelena Masyuk had been told the exact location of the package by well-known Chechen rebel commander Shamil Basayev.

The FSB statement to Interfax said the package and the information supplied to journalists were "a routine link in the chain of provocations by Shamil Basayev aimed at creating an atmosphere of fear in society."

Mr. Kulikov told TASS that the package was "a typical laboratory container."

An FSB official told Interfax Thursday that the item was probably a piece of X-ray equipment discarded by one of the many hospitals in the area. But the FSB was still conducting an investigation.

NTV showed an interview in which Mr. Basayev said he wanted to prove that the separatists possessed such weapons and were not bluffing by providing some samples as "a present."

But Mr. Kulikov made no direct connection between the package and the rebel threats. "The container found in Moscow represents no danger whatsoever," Mr. Kulikov said.

"As for the statements on this subject by rebels loyal to (Chechen leader Dzhokhar) Dudayev, they show once again the true nature of these people," he added.

The Emergency Situations Ministry said there had been no changes in radiation levels around Moscow.

Muscovites have been alarmed in recent days by media reports, denied by officials, that Mr. Basayev was in Moscow. The bearded rebel led a hostage seizure in the southern Russian town of Budennovsk in June in which 123 people were killed.

In other incidents, a grenade was discovered in central Moscow near parliament and two mines were dismantled at a petrol station on a main road often used by government motorcades.

TASS said the State Duma lower chamber of parliament might debate the discovery of the various explosive devices after a request to do so by the chamber's security committee.

UNHCR: EU undermines refugee rights

GENEVA (R) — The United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR) said Friday a new European Union ruling undermined international accords on treatment of asylum-seekers and could lead to tougher treatment of refugees around the world.

The widely-respected agency, closely involved in helping some 28 million people driven from their homes by conflict in dozens of countries, issued its comment in its second criticism of European states over asylum policies in two days.

The ruling in Brussels Thursday by EU ministers, the UNHCR said, "erodes refugee principles and could have large numbers of refugees without adequate protection."

The agency said the EU move could lead to the barring of people fleeing persecution by rebel groups — like Islamic fundamentalist guerrillas in Algeria who have targetted liberals and intellectuals as well as women who refuse to wear a veil.

The UNHCR also suggested the decision to tighten the definition of who can be accepted as a refugee had been taken to conform with restrictive policies of "a small minority" of the EU's 15 states — France, Germany, Italy and Sweden.

On Thursday, as EU justice and home affairs ministers agreed to make a 1951 definition of a refugee binding on all members, the UNHCR issued a wider report accusing European countries East and West of inhuman behaviour to asylum-seekers.

The Geneva-based agency, headed by U.N. High Commissioner for Refugee Sadako Ogata, said that in both parts of the continent people fleeing persecution at home were being held in prisons and detention centres for weeks, months and even years.

In its latest statement, the UNHCR said although it welcomed EU efforts to harmonise treatment of applicants for asylum it feard that some countries would use the Brussels decision to undermine basic principles of international law.

"UNHCR's main concern is that the EU position will allow states to avoid recognising as refugees people persecuted by "non-state agents' such as rebel groups or extremist organisations," it said.

"This interpretation creates an anomalous situation in which someone targetted by the government in a civil conflict could gain asylum abroad, but not an equally innocent civilian persecuted by the opposition, as has been the case with many Algerians."

If government authority collapsed totally in one country as had happened in Somalia and Liberia, no-one might qualify for refugee status.

Under the 1951 convention, agreed in Geneva soon after the creation of the UNHCR, people persecuted on grounds of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or for political convictions can apply for asylum.

But the convention makes no distinction between different sources of persecution.

Sri Lanka seeks more troops to help consolidate gains

COLOMBO (R) — The Sri Lankan army plans to recruit 10,000 troops to help tighten its grip on its northern gains and prepare for what it hopes will be a final onslaught against separatist Tamil rebels.

Military spokesman Brigadier Sarath Munasinghe told Sri Lankan journalists Friday that the army hopes to complete the recruiting drive within a month.

The army recruitment drive is being matched by Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) rebels, who have opened centres in areas across the northern Tamil region under their control and are seeking young fighters.

Brig. Munasinghe said most of the army recruits, after two months' training, would be posted in northern areas captured by the army from the LTTE.

He said interviews would begin on Dec. 4 at 27 centres, in an initiative designed to woo Tamil civilians away from Tiger rebels.

Troops Friday moved eastwards from Ariyalai and westwards from Colombuthurai in Jaffna peninsula's Valikamam area, carving farther into the rebel heartland, where the LTTE have been running a virtual mini-state of their own for nearly a decade, a military statement said.

Rebels fired on troops clearing built-up areas, killing four soldiers and wounding 33 more, including three officers, the statement said. It did not mention rebel casualties.

Eleven soldiers were killed Friday when rebels attacked an army foot patrol at Punani in the eastern Batticaloa district, the military said. Two officers and three soldiers were wounded in the attack.

The army this week cut off the rebel-held Jaffna City completely, leaving no way for an estimated 2,000 guerrillas holed up there to escape.

"We have effectively cut off Jaffna town from the rest of the peninsula," Brig. Munasinghe told a news conference Thursday.

The LTTE, who are fighting for a Tamil homeland in the north and east of Sri Lanka, Friday contradicted the army's claim that it was moving east and west of Ariyalai and Colombuthurai.

"Up to date the army had failed to make any further advance from Ariyalai. Heavy fighting has been continuing in Ariyalai for the past 24 hours," said an LTTE statement, faxed from its London office.

The statement said that the army was facing "stiff resistance from the LTTE in their attempts to enter Jaffna City."

The statement also said more than 200,000 Tamil civilians had fled the Valikamam area ahead of the army's arrival.

The civilians, housed in some 150 refugee camps in rebel-held areas in the peninsula and in Kilinochchi on the mainland, are being cared for by the Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation, the statement said.

Officials in the government-controlled northern town of Vavuniya told Reuters they had registered 168,430 refugees who had arrived on the mainland from the war-torn peninsula.

A senior government official in Colombo said refugees were being taken care of by the government and not by an organisation.

"All essential food items for refugees are supplied by the government and about 70 per cent of it is distributed free of charge," S.M.J. Senaratna, coordinator for relief operations in the uncleared areas of the north, told Reuters.

"The task of looking after refugees is in the hands of government officials in these areas."

At least four civilians were killed and more than 65 injured, when a truck being loaded by rebel Tamil Tigers with explosives at a munitions depot in the island's north exploded, Tamil sources said Friday.

The blast at an LTTE-run munitions depot at Chavakachcheri, on the southern edge of the northern Jaffna peninsula, also killed 10 LTTE rebels and injured several more, the sources said.

A number of houses in the vicinity were also damaged by the large explosion early Thursday.

The explosion occurred in an area where large numbers of Tamil refugees had gathered to escape the Sri Lankan army advance against Tiger guerrillas in the Jaffna town area, further to the north.

Amnesty reports arrest of Suu Kyi supporters

BANGKOK (AFP) — Amnesty International has reported the arrest in Rangoon of three supporters of Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and said it fears they may be facing torture.

In a statement received here Friday, the London-based human rights group said the three were representatives of the National League for Democracy (NLD) youth organisation attending a weekend address by Aung San Suu Kyi outside her home last Saturday.

"Amnesty International fears that three young men arrested in Yangoon (Rangoon) on Nov. 18, 1995 may be facing ill-treatment or torture in detention and may have been arrested solely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and association," it said.

The three, named as Maung Aye, Toe Aung and Myo Zaq, were charged the next day with assaulting police officials and preventing civil servants from carrying out their duties, and were reportedly tried on Nov. 20.

(In Rangoon, a party source said that three students, including two NLD members, had been sentenced to two years in prison for obstructing police who had erected barricades outside the dissident's home).

Amnesty quoted unofficial sources as saying the charges were "exaggerated and are a pretext to detain political activists."

The arrests came after the three and an unidentified fourth person — who was briefly detained and released — had tried to convince police to remove barricades in front of the house, Amnesty said.

Aung San Suu Kyi has spoken to crowds outside her family compound every weekend since her release from six years of house arrest in July, but last weekend police officials were present and put up barbed-wire barricades for the first time to keep the road clear, Amnesty noted.

As she began to speak, members of the crowd moved around the barricade to get closer, and she asked police to remove them but there was no response.

Amnesty said that torture and ill-treatment were "common" in Burma, both during interrogation and after sentencing. In addition, prison conditions were precarious, it said, due to overcrowding, insufficient food and lack of proper medical care.

Four months after she was released from house arrest, Mrs. Suu Kyi is finally trying to force the hand of the country's military junta, analysts said Friday.

Mrs. Suu Kyi's warning Wednesday that her National League for Democracy (NLD) party may boycott Burma's National Convention was the most direct challenge she has made to the junta since her release in July.

Analysts see the threat, which came only five days before the National Convention reconvenes Tuesday, as a measure to spur the military junta into making contact with, or at least acknowledging, the opposition leader.

"To use a tennis analogy, Aung San Suu Kyi has been hitting long balls into their (the junta's) court and they have just been letting them go past," one diplomat said. "She has got to force them to play a shot."

Since her release in July, Mrs. Suu Kyi has been keeping a low profile but has made repeated calls for dialogue with the junta.

The junta, however, has elected to ignore Mrs. Suu Kyi, even to the point of allowing her to hold almost daily political meetings at the lakeside compound where she spent six years under house arrest.

"They have been trying to marginalise her, but I don't think she will take that lying down," another diplomatic source said. "This may be a shot across the bows to shake the whole thing up," he added.

A group of Burmese military officers, including Deputy Premier Maung Maung Khin (centre) leave a hotel after attending a ceremony. Burma's military, which seized power in 1988 has insisted on maintaining a leading role in future Burmese governments (AFP photo)

Berlusconi- magistrates feud enters new ground

ROME (R) — Silvio Berlusconi's battle with Milan anti-graft investigators has entered dramatic new ground with allegations linking his media empire to bribes paid to Italy's reviled ex-Prime Minister Bettino Craxi.

Judge Maurizio Grigo Thursday ordered the arrest of Giorgio Vanoni, finance director of Mr. Berlusconi's Fininvest Company's foreign subsidiaries, on suspicion of channelling bribes to former Socialist Party leader Craxi.

"The last, dramatic match between the Milan magistrates and Silvio Berlusconi has begun," com.nented the Turin daily La Stampa newspaper in a front page editorial Friday.

"After years of suspicion and accusations, the old leftist invective against the two-headed Craxi-Berlusconi monster is taking bodily form," the Milan daily Corriere Della Sera newspaper remarked in a front page commentary.

The allegations of payments passing from the company to Mr. Craxi, the most despised politician in Italy, could cause severe damage to Mr. Berlusconi's public image in the build-up to an early general election widely expected for early next year.

Far-right deputy Mirko Tremaglia of the National Alliance (AN), Mr. Berlusconi's coalition partners, called Friday for the media magnate to take a step back from the leadership of the Freedom Alliance centre-right coalition.

"The time is now ripe. Berlusconi should and must take a step back. I appeal to his common sense," he said.

Mr. Tremaglia said AN leader Gianfranco Fini "has all his papers in order to become leader (of the bloc)."

Arrest warrants were also issued for Mr. Craxi, currently a fugitive from justice at his holiday home in Tunisia after being sentenced to jail for graft, and two close associates.

Fininvest has denied any wrongdoing while Mr. Berlusconi attacked what he called judicial "persecution."

Diplomats urge compromise over Bangladesh polls

DHAKA (Agencies) — Diplomats are urging Bangladesh's feuding government and opposition leaders to compromise over an election quarrel and avoid plunging the country into chaos, local media and political aides in both camps said Friday.

In the forefront was United States Ambassador David Merrill, who held lenghty talks separately with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and opposition leader Sheikh Hasina Thursday, the politicians' aides said.

Diplomatic sources said Mr. Merrill has urged Mrs. Khaleda to ensure maximum participation by the opposition parties in the next general election. The opposition has declared it will boycott parliamentary by-elections due on Dec. 15.

Mr. Merrill also urged her rival Mrs. Hasina to be more accommodating in the election process, in the interest of preserving the country's democracy, the sources said.

A popular Dhaka newspaper, the Ajker Kagoj, quoted Mr. Merrill as telling Mrs. Khaleda: "It's not a matter for us to know how the elections will be held. But what we do want is a credible election through participation of all political parties."

Government and opposition sources declined to give details but expected more talks with U.S. and other diplomats. U.S. embassy officials were not available to comment.

The opposition has spurned Mrs. Khaleda's offer to set up an interim government of her ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the opposition, to steward the general election.

An election is not due before March, but Mrs. Khaleda may seek to get parliament dissolved and hold the ballot in January.

"These may be the steps she has in mind to overcome the political stalemate," a BNP source said.

Mrs. Hasina and the allied Jatiya Party and Jamaat-E-Islami accuse the government of rigging a 1994 by-election and of corruption, and say no election under Mrs. Khaleda will be fair.

They want Mrs. Khaleda to hand power to a neutral caretaker administration to supervise the polls.

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One-man show, or role play?

THE FIRST policy statement by the new Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Barak, may have only been aimed to satisfy Israeli hardliners. It is not clear whether it will achieve its purpose, but it certainly succeeded in one thing: Intensifying Arab suspicions of Israel's commitment to its pledges in the peace deals it has signed with the Arabs. Mr. Barak on Thursday said before a Labour audience that the new government intends to annex certain parts of the West Bank and to hold on to the Jordan Valley as well as Jewish settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories. Mr. Barak cannot, we assume, be making a policy declaration that is out of tune with his Prime Minister, Shimon Peres. It is hard to imagine that the foreign minister would have ventured into policy statements that run counter to the overall policy of the new cabinet.

Mr. Peres, a shrewd and experienced politician, may have opted to send several early signals to his people to win the broadest possible support. By keeping the defence portfolio for himself, Mr. Peres no doubt wants to keep an effective grip on his government. Several Israeli commentators have already dubbed the new cabinet as a one-man show because Mr. Peres has kept the peace process effectively under his domain. It is no accident that the prime minister has put his protégé and close confidant, Yossi Beilin, in charge of the peace process. Mr. Barak is therefore performing a certain role for which he has been carefully selected.

While we wait for the Peres concert to emerge in the clearest possible terms on the future of the Palestinian territories, we still have a right to be concerned about the true designs of the new government on the West Bank. We are not talking here about the Peres government appearing too hawkish already as regards Israel's security and claims on Palestinian lands. Rather, we are concerned about whether the early pronouncements of Mr. Barak actually reflect the bottom line posture of Mr. Peres himself. If that is the case, then the argument in favour of advancing the negotiations on the final status of the West Bank and East Jerusalem would naturally acquire an added sense of urgency. It is a well-known fact that Mr. Beilin is in favour of dealing with the third stage of negotiation, with the Palestinians head on rather than procrastinating over them until a much later date. Given the conflicting signals emanating from the new Israeli government, it might not be such a bad idea to follow the counsel of Mr. Beilin and start determining the final status of the West Bank now rather than later. At the moment Mr. Peres has two advantages that he might capitalise on to push the peace process to a point of no return. The first is the sympathy which he and his party won following Mr. Rabin's assassination. This sympathy has temporarily weakened the right. The second advantage that Mr. Peres has is the line up of his cabinet which includes many ministers who prefer a complete disengagement from the Palestinians and the establishment of a Palestinian state. The Israeli right does not deserve gestures of goodwill from Mr. Peres and big ministers. What the Israelis need most now is a show of determination that the peace process was strengthened rather than weakened, by Mr. Rabin's association.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A COLUMNIST in Al Ra'i daily attacked Rolf Ekeus, the U.N. envoy charged with destroying Iraq's weapons, for seeking what he described as pretexts, whether justified or not, to perpetuate the sanctions on the Iraqi people. Not only has Mr. Ekeus been sending reports to the Security Council claiming that Iraq still hides weapons and is not cooperating enough with the U.N. inspection teams, but he is also trying by all means to extend the duration of his team's mission and asking the oil-rich Arab states to finance that mission, said Tareq Masarweh. The writer said that Mr. Ekeus, who has lately toured rich Arab countries to raise funds for his mission, is squandering the money on luxurious hotels, first class air travel, expensive cars and other unnecessary matters not at all connected with his mission. Indeed, the mission of Mr. Ekeus is now transforming itself like that of UNRWA, which is an agency originally created to care for the Palestinian refugees but has been transformed into an agency employing highly paid Western officials and seeking perpetuation at the expense of Arab countries' wealth and donations, said the writer. He said what is happening now with the Palestine refugee problem and Iraq is clear to all: The Arabs are asked to continue financing their own disasters and their continued suffering.

A WRITER in Al Ra'i reflected on the situation in the Arab World, where the majority of people live at the poverty line while, he said, some rulers squander funds on their own selfish interests or to finance operations undertaken by major world powers. Samir Qtami said it is shocking to hear Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi announcing that he was paying the fees of Italian lawyers defending Juliuo Andreotti, the former Italian prime minister now on trial for alleged contacts with the Mafia. Mr. Qadhafi is doing that while his countrymen suffer under the U.N. sanctions and at a time when his own people are in need of every penny. Likewise, said the writer, other Arab leaders compete with one another in squandering funds on caring for animals in London's zoo, protecting the environment in the Amazon basin, financing the Contra rebels or those rebels in Irlenad, El Salvador or Sudan or even financing American CIA operations in Afghanistan or financially sponsoring beauty contests or horse races etc. While nearly 80 per cent of the Arab masses live in poverty, said the writer, some of their rulers continue to squander public funds.

Jordanian Perspective

By Dr. Musa Keilani

War against terrorism should be waged collectively

WE CANNOT but condemn the recent spate of extremist attacks in several countries mostly attributed to Egyptian groups. At the same time, however, we hasten to remind the international community that these actions should not be used to add further colour to the "Islamophobia" – as aptly termed by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan – in the West. An educated look at the attacks would clearly indicate that they were the result of specific measures adopted by foreign governments to stamp out extremism, but that should not discourage anyone around the world from adopting a determined struggle against terrorism in all its manifestations.

The recent subversive actions should be condemned in the strongest terms and all concerned governments should get together and adopt determined and collective action against terrorism anywhere in the world. Given some of the particularities of the extremists and the obvious backing they enjoy from some regimes in the Middle East and North Africa, such collective action should take the form of total isolation in diplomatic terms and blanket sanctions that would cut off the inflow of revenues to those regimes to finance their puppets.

We in Jordan have paid a heavy price for our pragmatism, moderate positions and diplomacy based on international cooperation and mutual understanding and we stand ready to contribute whatever we could to advance the cause against extremism. But our sole voice is not simply enough. We would like to see others in the region opting to shelve petty political differences and join hands to fight extremists everywhere rather than adopting a selective approach to the phenomena.

Looked at closely, we can discern a pattern in the recent extremist attacks attributed to Egyptian groups. If anything, the message that seems to emanate from the attacks is directed towards governments that might have something to do with the fight against extremism regardless of their overall political positions vis-a-vis international issues.

The main message, it seems, is that the concerned governments should not resort to deportations of extremists to Egypt since the extremists would like to continue to enjoy the democratic atmosphere in some of the countries and press their subversive actions without hindrance.

The pattern is clear: The car-bomb explosion in Croatia a few weeks ago stopped the Croatian government from deporting Fouad Qassem, a leader of the Egyptian Gamaa Al Islamiyah, to Egypt.

An Egyptian diplomat in Geneva was shot dead in Geneva two weeks ago. A claim of responsibility for the killing by a hitherto unknown group was indeed a red herring aimed at throwing the investigations into a wrong track since it has since emerged that the Egyptian diplomat, although described as a trade attaché, was in fact an intelligence officer who was allegadly on the tail of Ayman Zawahiri, another Gamaa leader, and was eliminated when he got too close to his target.

The bomb explosion at the Egyptian embassy in Islamabad came four weeks after the mission was directly involved in the Pakistani interrogation and deportation of eight Gamaa suspects to Egypt. It has been a public secret over the last five years that the embassy was dominated by Egyptian security agents who were trying to track down Egyptian extremists who once fought alongside the Afghan mujahedeen but stayed back after the Afghan war and started exporting extremism to Arab countries. The signing two years ago of an extradition treaty between the governments of Pakistan and Egypt was indeed a major blow to the continued presence of Egyptian extremists, who belong to the self-styled Arab Afghans.

What seems to have been out of step in the series of attacks is the car-bomb blast in Riyadh at a U.S.-run facility that trained Saudi Arabia's National Guards. Notwithstanding the claims of three different underground groups that they were behind the explosion, the possibility remains distantly open that the recent move by the Saudi authorities to reduce the number of Egyptian workers in the kingdom had somehow led to the departure home of some Egyptian extremists caught up in a summary sweep against foreign workers and had thus infuriated the extremist groups.

It has also emerged that the techniques used by the bombers in all these attacks bore the hallmarks of a major militant group in Lebanon financed by a non-Arab country in the region. It would also seem that there was a direct involvement by the said group in these attacks at least in terms of putting together the explosive devices and letting "voluntary suicide bombers" carry out the actual blast.

There are experts who believe that the said group is rather "monopolising" the technique of assembling the bombs and has steadfastly refused to impart the "technology" to other groups, whether Egyptian or otherwise. This would imply a strong desire to be closely involved in every act of sabotage in the region while, for all practical purposes, staying away from actually taking part in the attacks. That very desire is very sinister because it points to a determination not to be dissuaded by any action adopted by any government to stamp out terrorism and a single-minded devotion to offer guidance and create chaos and instability in the region. The very frustration of many in the region over social injustice, poverty and unemployment is the best breeding ground for the group to recruit selected candidates to carry out the attacks.

Against this backdrop, the question that comes up is: *Where do we go from here?*

The regional parties and the international communities cannot continue to adopt a passive approach to the growing tendency to use violence as a means to achieve non-achievable objectives of certain states. We have to opt for concerted action on two parallel approaches, one aimed at eliminating the root causes for frustration in our societies that give rise to desperation and willingness to embrace extremism, and the other to root out the very tree that not only offers a shade to extremists but also offers direct encouragement and support for extremism.

WEEK IN PRINT

Extremism harming the name of Islam

Reviewed by Elia Nasarallah

THE LOCAL press last week gave prominence to the carbomb explosion in Pakistan, the outcome of the Algerian presidential elections, domestic issues and the implications of the assassination of the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Strongly attacking elements which claimed responsibility for the carbomb blast at he Egyptian embassy in Islamabad, a writer in Al Ra'i daily said that the extremist groups which claim to be Islamists and to be responsible for the attack have succeeded only in doing great harm to Islam. Abdullah Rafi'i said that the attack would force Pakistan to take painful measures against Islamists, force Egypt to crack harder on Islamic extremist groups, and would divert world public attention away from the Jewish terrorists who killed the Israeli prime minister. The writer said that after involving Algeria, Egypt, Afghanistan and other Muslim nations in turmoil, the terrorists, who blew up the Egyptian embassy, have triggered a new struggle and a new cycle of bloodshed in Pakistan, another Muslim Nation.

Mahmoud Rimawi, another Al Ra'i columnist, described the carbomb blast in Islamabad as threatening the extemist groups which carried out the attack more than the Egyptian or Pakistani governments or institutions. The writer said that not only will such terrorist campaigns contribute to isolating extremist groups from the Egyptian people but they will also provide the authorities with a strong pretext for completely eliminating them. Such actions on the part of the extremists show clearly that they have no regard to human life and innocnet people and their attacks leave no choice to the concerned governments but to crack harder on the Islamists, including the Muslim Brotherhood group, which could lose the sympathy and support of the local communities.

A writer in Al Ra'i said that there is greatest need for Muslims to defend Islam by condemning the terrorist attacks which were claimed by elements calling themselves Islamists. Sultan Al Hattab said that the killing of 16 innocent people and injuring 60 others in the carbomb blast in Islamabad was totally alien to Islam and truly Muslim people. All the Islamic organisations in the Arab World should declare openly their utmost rejection of terrorist actions and condemn their perpetrators regardless of their identity and their alleged Islamic affiliation, demanded the writer. He said that three Islamic groups which were quick to announce their responsibility for the Islamabad attack will now realise that their action only benefits the enemies of the Islamic faith and is bound to do great harm to Muslims around the world.

In the view of Taher Adwan, a writer in Al Dustour, the Islamabad blast will trigger a new cycle of bloody violence in Pakistan as it did in Egypt and Algeria. The writer said that the perpetrators of the attack are taking the lives of innocent people in their drive to take vengeance on the Egyptian authorities, adding that the same groups could pursue similar attacks elsewhere in the Arab and Muslim World. Meagre condemnation of such groups and their actions will not helpend the cycle of violence, said the writer, who demanded strong action in confronting terrorism in all its forms. It is true that stricter security measures will help in this case but, said the writer, there is need for spreading awareness among Arabs and Muslims against extremism and terrorism and enlisting scholars assistance in overcoming this mushrooming plague that is harming the Arabs and Muslims and their faith.

Tareq Masarweh, a columnist in Al Ra'i, said that by electing Liamine Zeroual as president, the Algerian people proved thier anti-violence orientation. By electing a moderate leader, the Algerians have defied the pressure and the intimidation of the extemist groups, which not only boycotted the elections but threatened to carry out terrorist attacks on the voters, said the writer. He said that the Algerians, who have the right to live in peace, have thus voiced their views clearly telling the world that they can no more accept more death and destruction and poverty at the hands of those claiming to be Islamists and want to rule by violence and force.

Taher Adwar said that though the election of Mr. Zeroual by itself cannot solve the Algerian problem, it marked a new chapter in history of the country, whose inhabitants have expressed desire to live a peaceful life. By declaring that he was open for dialogue with the Islamic Salvation Front, the president has shown his willingness to reach a solution that would end the bloodshed for good, said the writer. Mr. Zeroual's announcement offes a historic chance to the Islamists to seek a settlement through dialogue and peaceful negotiations, said the writer, who added that only those who refuse dialogue will be losers.

In the view of Bassam Emoush, a writer in Al Ra'i, the Islamic Salvation Front and other opposition groups in Algeria should work hard and try to win the legislative elections through unifying their forces and joining hands together. The writer, who is a member of the Islamic Action Front and meber of the Lower House of Parliament, said that the president's major challenge is in the coming parliamentary elections and so he will now be trying to win the public support for any measures he might resort to before the elections. Saying that the Islamists have suffered a setback when a moderate Islamist, Mahfouz Nahnah who ran for the elections failed, the writer said that the Islamist groups should be ready for the coming elections and win them or they will go underground again and lose the people's support.

By turning out en masse to vote in the presidential elections, the Algerian people have proved courageous and determined to confront extremism by any possible method, said Saleh Qallab, a writer in Al Dustour. The writer said that the people's election of a moderate personality as president has transformed the extremist groups into mere gangs of outlaws, isolated from the rest of Algerian people, and lacking any support for their terrorist actions. By defying the threats and the intimidations by the opposition groups, the Algerians have thus chosen the right path, which is hoped to open the way for a lasting settlement to their country's problem, said the writer.

It is rather encouraging to see the Algerian presidential elections completed without any incident and to see the majorityof people choosoing a moderate leaders favouring dialogue with the opposition groups, said Mohammad Kawash, a columnist in Al Dustour. The real reasons behind the strife in Algeria, said the writer, is not the desire by the opposition groups to merely assume power but rather, he said the grave sitution resulting from poverty, unemployment, economic crises and corruption. He said the president can win again and secure the support of even the opposition groups if he succeeds in dealing with the real problems, introduces reforms and restores real democracy to the country.

Fahd Al Fanek, a writer in Al Ra'i daily, justified the passive attitude of the silent majority in Jordan by saying that it is the volatile poltical situation in the country and the unstable policies that force this majority to remain silent. For instance, he said, for 32 years political Islam represented by the Muslim Brotherhood group, was accepted in Jordan. But, he said, the government has changed its position against the group although this groups did not change its own position. Likewise, for the past 15 years, Jordan stood by Iraq and the silent majority responded favourably to this stand, said the writer, He said though Iraq's internal policies regarding democrcy, for instance, have remained the same all along, Jordan has changed its stand vis-a-vis Baghdad and the silent majority was expected to change its own stand overnight. For the past 46 years, added the writer, Israel used to be Jordan's number one enemy, but the official Jordanian stand has suddenly changed and this enemy has become a friend. The same can be said about the decision to sever ties with the West Bank, he said. In view of this situation, said the writer, the silent majority prefers to remain silent.

Another columnist in Al Ra'i daily forecast bad news for the needy groups and the limited income families in Jordan by the start of the coming year. Khaled Zubeidi said that there were indications that the government will raise the prices of water, fuel and other commodities and remove the subsidies on others. This will be a new form of taxation imposed on the public, which is reeling under hardships represented in the soaring prices of basic commodities, said the writer. The heavy taxes are burdening the majority of the people, who have been looking forward to the implementation of government promises for raising the standard of their living and reaping the benefits of peace.

War crimes: Do not despair

By Gwynne Dyer

IF THE Balkan peace settlement signed in Dayton last Tuesday collapses into renewed war, it will be because the Bosnian Serb leaders, President Radovan Karadzic and General Ratko Mladic, sabotage it in order to escape prosecution for genocide and crimes against humanity. If that happens, do we cheer or weep?

It would be far better if the peace settlement stands, if Mr. Karadzic and Mr. Mladic have to step down, and if they are then tried and executed for their crimes. But if pursuing them means destroying the shaky peace deal, is it worth it?

Yes, it is. If you doubt that, consider what Judge Fouad Riad of the U.N. War Crimes Tribunal said when he handed down the latest indictments against Mr. Karadzic and Mr. Mladic on November 16.

The evidence submitted by chief prosecutor Richard Goldstone, the judge said, depicts "scenes of unimaginable savagery: thousands of men executed and buried in mass graves, hundreds of men buried alive, men and women mutilated and slaughtered, children killed before their mother's eyes, a grandfather forced to eat the liver of his own grandson."

These scenes of horror happened only last July, when at least 6,000 Bosnian Muslims were slaughtered after the U.N. failed to stop the Bosnian Serbs from overrunning the "safe area" of Srebrenica. Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic were there to supervise the operation, of course, just as they have overseen dozens of similar scenes (for some of which they have also been indicted) during three years of anti-Muslim genocide in Bosnia.

Do you just let that go, and leave them in power? On the 50th anniversary of the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal, the first serious international attempt to define and punish crimes against humanity, do you settle for peace at any price? No, you can't — and to its credit, the United States government has not sold out.

Washington has sacrificed many principles it once upheld to get a settlement in the Balkans: the principle of a unified multinational Bosnia, the right of all those who were "ethnically cleansed" to go home, and much more besides. But on one point it has been adamant: the war criminals do not get off.

Mr. Karadzic and Mr. Mladic were not even at the Dayton talks (Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic represented their interest), because the U.S. announced that they would be "arrested on sight". And if that tough policy leads the Bosnian Serb leaders to conspire to thwart the peace treaty, then so be it. Some compromises are not worth making.

An equally tough line is now being taken in what seemed to be another lost cause: justice for the victims of last year's genocide in Rwanda, in which at least half a million people, mostly from the minority Tutsi tribe, were killed.

The U.N. War Crimes Tribunal now has 50 investigators in Rwanda, and expects to bring the first indictments against the senior Hutu political and military figures who instigated the slaughter in December. It is a shoestring operation, but very competently run.

The first indictments will focus on the most coordinated massacres; where thousands of people were herded into stadiums or churches, held for days, and then hacked to death. "If we can show these sexy cases," said an investigator who understands the media all too well, "then we can go back to the international community and say: 'See what we can do. And if you give us more resources and time, we can do an even better job'."

It's getting to be a trend: people who kill their fellow-citizens for political reasons, even generals, are starting to be treated like the common murderers that they are.

In Chile, two retired senior generals who ordered the assassination of the country's former foreign minister, Orlando Letelier, in Washington in 1976, finally went to jail this year. A few serving officers demonstrated on their behalf, but the former dictator himself, General Augusto Pinochet, ordered Chilean officers to obey the elected government and the courts.

In Honduras last month, Judge Roy Medina ordered the arrest of three army officers who ran Battalion 3-16, a U.S.-trained death squad that murdered around 200 students, trade unionists, and others in the early 1980s. Armed forces commander Luis Alonso Discua sent armoured cars into the streets in August to frighten the civilians off — but they didn't lose their nerve, and now the U.S. has promised to open its files on Battalion 3-16.

In South Korea, retired armed forces chief Roh Tae Woo was jailed on November 16 on charges of bribery when he was president in 1988-93. But the country is getting close to opening up the real case against the general: his complicity in the military's massacre of hundreds of students in Kwangju in the early 1980s.

Culture of peace overtaking decades of hostility

The following address, by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, was delivered on behalf of the Prince by Her Royal Highness Princess Sarvath at the biennial dinner of the Anglo-Jordanian Society in London on Nov. 20.

MY HUSBAND, Crown Prince Hassan sends you his greetings and best wishes. He is extremely sorry not to be here with us tonight, but has asked me to convey the following message to you.

When the Anglo-Jordanian Society was founded, some fifteen years ago, peace in the Middle East was but a distant prospect at best. In 1995, however, we have a real chance to put behind us the long years of conflict, the many tragedies of the region, and to build a better future for all. The political climate has changed radically. TThe pall of mistrust and uncertainty that shadowed our region has been dispelled by the successive steps taken towards a comprehensive and lasting peace. The talks that were held in Madrid, and in Oslo, and the signing of the Israeli/Jordanian peace treaty in October last year were all crucial for an equitable and permanent resolution of the untenable status quo that existed.

The interim agreement to expand Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank, sometimes called Oslo II, was also a significant accomplishment to this end. The Palestine question has always been at the heart of the conflict with Jordan consistently maintaining that peace will not succeed until it involves all the regional parties without exclusion and addressing all the issues, without exception. It is our hope that Syria and Lebanon will soon join us in forging a truly comprehensive, just and lasting peace.

Another vital landmark on the path to such a peace was the Middle East and North Africa Economic summit, held in Amman at the end of October. The summit provided an opportunity for international and regional participants to identify and discuss joint projects and investments, and to deal in concrete terms with the substance of peace-building, as opposed to peace-making.

Among the tangible achievements of the summit were the establishment of four regional institutions: the Bank for Economic Cooperation and Development in the Middle East, the Middle East-Mediterranean Travel and Tourism Association, the Regional Business Council, and the Regional Economic Development Working Group, also known as REDWEG. These institutions reflect a new desire among the parties of the region to foster sustained consultation and to enhance regional cooperation for economic development and social progress. The institutional framework that we are now putting in place will facilitate the evolution of a new Middle East, one that is well-equipped to join the global adventure of the 21st Century in partnership with Europe.

Underlying these achievements is a basic change in thinking. It has finally been recognised that the security and prosperity of each ultimately depends on the well-being of all. Today we see Israelis taking an active interest in the well-being of Palestinians in Gaza, Nablus, Jenin and Jericho. Palestinians are concerned with the security of Israelis within Israel. Indeed, we are fast approaching the point where the vast majority of people of Beirut, Damascus, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Cairo and Amman will work to contribute to each other's welfare and prosperity in the knowledge that it is intimately linked to their own. Human resource development at the regional level is thus replacing the arms race as a practical way to promote security. For true peace is ultimately not about governments, treaties and armies, but about the lives and souls of everyday people.

The salvation of contemporary society lies in respect for every culture. From our historic perspective in the Middle East, where a historic accommodation of differences is slowly taking place, there is no point more crucial than this. For after decades of conflict, Arabs and Jews are finally beginning to recognise each other's hopes, fears, and beliefs.

Human resource development of the Middle East reorients the region by the compass of a fresh vision of the future. In that future, peace, security and cooperation, underpinned by mutual acceptance and respect, will be the norms and not the exceptions. It should be understood however, that this will take time, for long standing attitudes cannot be expected to change overnight. But by embracing the culture of peace, the region has made a powerful statement about its intentions for its future. Let "things past belong to memory alone; things future are the property of hope... "

Therefore, it is a source of great sadness to me that in this year of peace, the prime minister of Israel was struck down by an assassin's bullets. The Middle East has witnessed many shocking and challenging events in the course of this turbulent century; but the murder of a peace-maker is particularly tragic. My grandfather, King Abdullah, gave his life in seeking to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict; President Sadat of Egypt died trying to end it; and now Prime Minister Rabin has paid the ultimate price for his beliefs and actions. But the best way to honour those who have died in the quest for peace must be to continue that quest. I recall the prime minister's personal contribution to the joint Jordanian/Israeli mission to Bosnia last August. Our message then was "Peace in the Middle East, Peace to the World." For either we build a state system of interdependence, or we succumb to ethnic and sectarian violence. The late prime minister was steadfast in his beliefs, and its symbolic of the transformations that have taken place in the Middle East of the 1990s that Yitzhak Rabin should be remembered not only as a determined military leader, but as an equally singleminded peace-maker. It is a tribute to the importance of the search for peace that not even an event of this magnitude can derail our steady progress towards regional conciliation and reconstruction.

Her Royal Highness Princess Sarvath

In this endeavour, our traditional ties with the United Kingdom stand us in good stead. Britain will always hold a special place in the hearts and minds of Jordanians. From the days of our grandfathers, King George V and King Abdullah, Jordan and the U.K. have enjoyed close and mutually beneficial relations. Founded as it is, upon shared interests and values, and cemented by enduring political and trade ties, our historical friendship remains much more than merely a matter of tradition. As we in the region set about the task of building that comprehensive and new Middle Eastern order, this particular relationship can only be a source of strength.

The Anglo-Jordanian Society has worked tirelessly to develop this partnership, and to promote a deeper fellowship between our two peoples. For this, it deserves our sincere thanks. I would like in particular to congratulate the very capable officials and administrators who have made this society what it is today. May I, on behalf of all Jordanians, wish you every success in the future.

Last week the Jordanian family celebrated His Majesty's sixtieth birthday. We are fortunate to enjoy living in, with apologies to Tennyson,

"A goodly place, a goodly time,

For it was in his golden prime."

The forty three years of His Majesty's reign have witnessed the evolution and transformation of our country, and we bask in the warm glow of his golden prime. We have moved from an indifferent seat in the stall to a central role on the international stage. His Majesty's vision of the future has clearly been the motivation for a generation of Jordanians, not least myself. His aspirations are our inspiration.

May one old *Harrovian* conclude by wishing another old Harrovian in the spirit of the Harrow School song, Forty years on, Your Majesty!

Royal Jordanian: A prime example of institution building

By Mohammad Asi

TRANSPORT HAS throughout history played a fundamental role in the economic development, prosperity and well-being of human societies. History is abundant with examples of the impact of transportation on economic development and trade. The Roman road network, Arab caravan routes, Portuguese, Spanish as well as Italian city-states' merchant fleets in medieval times, the British fleet of the 18th, 19th and early 20th century as well as the railway and its conquering of the American West in the late 19th and early 20th century, are all great examples that stand vivid in our memories.

But nothing in the history of transportation can be equated with that of the birth of air transport at the turn of this century and its development to its present status. It can be justifiably described as a turning point in human history equal to the invention of the wheel, the printing press and the telephone.

In an interdependent and closely-knit world, air transport provides an institutionalised medium for the exchange of peoples and ideas, the transfer of technology, the exchange of culture, goods and services and that all result in goodwill between peoples.

Air transport played and continues to play a fundamental role in the economic development of Jordan for at least two reasons: Firstly, that Jordan is basically landlocked with the exception of a small sea outlet on the Red Sea, Aqaba. And secondly, due to a basic lack of natural resources except for rock phosphate and potash. For economic development cannot take place in a vacuum and must have the prerequisites of an efficient internal and external transportation systems to link it domestically and with the outside world to allow a smooth and continuous two-way flow of peoples, ideas, technology, goods and services.

In the case of Jordan, geography and civil air transport are wedded into natural complementarity: Jordan is at once a small and landlocked state but strategically located at the heart of the Middle East. The geographic location endowed Jordan with a wealth of history and a treasure of tourist attractions, which made the country a regional and international travel hub and as a result necessitated the development of the commercial air transport which allowed that potential to be realised, making Amman both a regional and international gateway between East and West.

Therefore, the Royal Decree issued on Dec. 5, 1963 by His Majesty King Hussein to establish the national carrier, Royal Jordanian, was a natural response to and a deep understanding of the crucial role envisioned by him to be played by commercial air transport in the future of Jordan.

Nowhere can one observe so succinctly stated the prerequisite for institution-building to serve economic development, prosperity and the well-being of Jordan as in the Royal Decree in which King Hussein chartered the objectives for Royal Jordanian.

"I want our national airlines to be our ambassador of goodwill around the world and the bridge across which we exchange culture, civilisation, trade, technology, friendship, and better understanding with the world." For over three decades Royal Jordanian lived up to and become a concrete manifestation of the King's vision.

The realisation of RJ objectives highlighted by the Royal Decree tanslated over the past three decades into tangible and intangible benefits to the Jordanian economy and Jordan at large. The most important is the socio-economic benefit: RJ employed and continues to employ over 5,000 highly-skilled Jordanians here at home and abroad, thus supporting and sustaining the livelihood of thousands of families and contributing a continuous cash flow injection into the local economy.

The fact that the airline business is a highly developed industry requiring a highly-skilled labour force to support its state of the art technology, necessitated that RJ set up in-house on the job training facilities to sustain the continuous development of the airline to prevailing international standards. In this respect RJ became an advanced and specialised training institution not for Jordanians only but for Arab and foreign airlines staff and gained equal recognition no less in its importance than our first academic institution, the Jordan University, happily and coincidently established just one year earlier than RJ in 1962.

Like Jordan itself, small in geography and resources but big in its ambitions and outlook, RJ had big ambitions too and therefore spread its vibrant wings to the far-reaches of the globe carrying the Jordanian flag and building bridges of goodwill and understanding not only with the adjacent Arab World but with so many nations around the world.

Just as importantly, RJ has acted as a catalyst for the development of commercial air transportation to/from Jordan to these countries which resulted in reciprocal bilateral agreements engineered by our civil aviation authorities. Encouraged by the fact that Jordan has always been an island of stability and moderation and endowed with a treasure of touristic attractions and moderate climate and the hospitable and warm people, so many Arab and foreign airlines flocked to establish scheduled operations to Amman which truly became a regional and international club between East and West. This healthy development of commercial air transportation between Jordan and the outside world resulted in concrete economic benefits to Jordan. These foreign airlines set up offices in Jordan and availed new employment opportunities for many Jordanians, the same as RJ did in the countries to which it operated.

More importantly, the above development was to open the way for a most promising industry, namely tourism. Tourism poured millions of dollars in hard currencies not only to the airlines for the transportation of tourists but for hotels, restaurants, souvenir shops and land transport companies in Jordan, all of which had to be developed to serve and support tourism.

The development of this tourism infrastructure is now being accelerated to cater for the increased number of tourists flocking to Jordan especially after the conclusion of the peace treaty with Israel. As a result, thousands of Jordanians were employed in sectors supporting tourism.

The development of air travel instigated by RJ to some fifty destinations worldwide also translated into many concrete benefits to the Jordanian economy and Jordan at large.

For over three decades RJ facilitated the movement of students, tourists, businessmen, diplomats to and from Jordan and allowed the transfer of technology in its various forms to Jordan.

The sight of RJ aircraft landing or taking off abroad boldly adorned by the Royal Crown inspires Jordanians and non-Jordanians alike. It is the symbol of the small but invulnerable and enduring Jordan, inspired and led by a great visionary, His Majesty King Hussein.

Clearly, RJ operations abroad were always preceded and facilitated by such goodwill patiently cultivated by King Hussein's leadership and his superior skills and penetrating insight into the arena of foreign policy and international relations. RJ operations abroad reinforced and consolidated that goodwill and positive image of Jordan as the King wished it to be.

The King's vision in establishing RJ and his continuous support of it is an example par excellence of his relentless and marathonic drive in institution-building over the past forty years. Much of the success of RJ especially abroad, from Jakarta in the East to Chicago in the West and all in between, can only be credited to the King's visionary, consistent, realistic and long-term policy of moderation and modernisation, which are the hallmark of Jordanian policy recognised the world over.

The writer is RJ area manager in the Netherlands. He contributed this article to the Jordan Times on the occasion of His Majesty King Hussein's 60th birthday.

Jordan seeks to preserve Iraq

(Continued from page 1)

London, named after the late Iraqi Shiite leader Ayatollah Khoei, largely represents Iraqi Shiites and is seen mostly independent of Iranian-controlled Iraqi Shiite groups, and, as such, a "comfortable" partner to Saudi Arabia, the Arab Gulf, and the West powers which all dread Iranian-influenced Iraqi dissidents.

"We have regular and uninterrupted contacts with His Majesty and his representatives," said a source close to Yousef Khoei, a grandson of Ayatollah Khoei, noting that "relations between the Khoei family date back to many years and are not restricted to current political developments or after the Gulf crisis."

The source noted that King Hussein had appealed in vain to the Iraqi leadership to allow Ayatollah Khoei be moved to Jordan for medical treatment when he fell ill in 1992 and had taken part in a funeral service in London for the Shiite leader after his death in the same year. "These gestures had no political overhangs to them, but reflected the long-standing ties between the Hashemites and the Khoei family," said the source.

In his comments to the Jordan Times on Friday, Mr. Kabariti refrained from any direct reference to the King's current schedule in London. But, he said, "Jordan is seeking a unified approach by all the segments of the Iraqi society based on a full understanding of the need to end the present situation in Iraq."

According to Iraq watchers in Amman and elsewhere, Ahmad Chalabi, head of the Iraqi National Congress (INC), an umbrella group for Iraqi exiles, does not have a role in the Jordanian-proposed Iraqi dialogue if only because of the criminal convictions and charges against Mr. Chalabi in Jordan and elsewhere. Mr. Chalabi, who headed the now-defunct Petra Bank in Jordan, has been convicted of embezzlement and other charges in the Kingdom and faces similar charges in Switzerland and the U.S.

"As much as Chalabi aspires to play a key role in an Iraqi dialogue, he cannot hope to have one," said one analyst. "He is finished, as far as most other players are concerned."

According to the sources, as "starting point" an Iraqi dialogue should involve "credible representatives" of the Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds of Iraq as called for by King Hussein, and Gen. Hussein Kamel, supported by other Sunni defectors from Iraq, including former intelligence chief Wafik Sammarai (who lives in Syria), could represent the Sunnis, representatives of Ayatollah Khoei the Shiites and the Kurds could be represented by rivals Jalal Talabani and Masouad Barzani.

Sources close to Gen. Kamel confirmed that they had been in touch with Mr. Talabani, who is based in Kurdistan in northern Iraq, and that contacts were also under way with Mr. Barzani. However, the sources said, Mr. Talabani appeared to be the "right" candidate for initial contacts before bringing in Mr. Barzani.

The sources also say that Gen. Kamel, who has set up base in Amman, is seeking to set up a "higher national council of Iraq" grouping representatives of the three sects.

Political experts here are divided over Gen. Kamel's role in the effort to bring about a new Iraq.

"Personalities in the Iraqi ruling circles but opposed to the policies of the regime do not seem to attache much importance to the role of Hussein Kamel," said an informed source. "They are not willing to coordinate any of their moves with the defector."

However, others argue that Gen. Kamel represents perhaps the only means to assure many in the ruling elite in Baghdad to cooperate with any effort to bring about changes in Iraq.

"Gen. Kamel is the only one who could enlist the support of elements in the regime, particularly some of the Tikritis, by assuring them that they would not be forced to pay for the mistakes of the Saddam regime," commented one analyst. "Without the support of inside elements in Baghdad it is difficult, to say the least, to envisage any changes in Baghdad under the present situation."

Arafat welcomes

(Continued from page 1)

over by the Israelis by Dec. 18.

Mr. Kinkel said Mr. Arafat had told him that he was looking forward particularly to the elections and how important they were for "Palestinian identity."

Mr. Arafat, who arrived in Germany Thursday, was presented with a prestigious German media prize in Baden-Baden late the same day for his commitment to peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Rabin who was awarded it jointly with Mr. Arafat, received the prize posthumously.

The Palestinian leader expressed confidence that the peace process would continue unbroken under Mr. Rabin's successor as Israeli prime minister, Shimon Peres.

He was also received Friday by Chancellor Helmut Kohl in Bonn, where he was meeting with Economic Cooperation Minister Carl-Dieter Spranger and German business leaders. Mr. Arafat visits Hamburg Saturday.

In a German press interview published Friday, Mr. Arafat presented evidence of alleged links between extremist Israeli and Palestinian groups, notably regarding a bomb attack on a bus in which 21 Israeli soldiers were killed.

On Thursday Mr. Arafat appealed to Mr. Peres to continue their joint efforts for peace after the assassination of Mr. Rabin.

"I ask my partner Peres to walk the path of peace with me to its completion," Mr. Arafat said as he accepted the German media prize.

"Rabin should gave been here with us this evening," Mr. Arafat added at the ceremony in Baden-Baden, adding that the work of reconciliation could not be stopped by stupidity or the efforts of terrorists.

In earlier comments to reporters in Stuttgart he had said he was ready to meet Mr. Peres at any time to help ensure the implementation of agreements on Palestinian autonomy.

"I am ready when he is ready. We will continue implementing what has already been agreed upon. We are looking forward to an accurate implementation," he said.

Peres woos religious parties

(Continued from page 1)

if only it can be achieved in conditions that satisfy the basic security needs of the State of Israel."

Mr. Rabin's ghost hovered over the foreign ministry where Mr. Peres formally handed his old job over to Mr. Barak.

Mr. Barak, like Mr. Rabin a soldier-turned-politician, was given the number three cabinet post to boost the government's credentials with a security-conscious electorate.

Mr. Rabin played "Mr. Security" to Mr. Peres's prophet of peace, a double act which worked in the 1992 election.

The Labour Party hopes a Peres-Barak duo will work again in polls due within 11 months.

Mr. Barak's rise has been meteoric. He left the army after 35 years only in January and was catapulted by Mr. Rabin into the cabinet as interior minister.

Speaking on Wednesday night with the cautious delivery of a military man, Mr. Barak, 53, promised to pursue peace with Syria.

"I am sure they (Syria) will find in us a partner attentive to the possibilities of peace and very sensitive to the security issue," Mr. Barak said. As army chief Mr. Barak met his Syrian counterpart for unproductive talks last December.

Israeli-Syrian talks are stuck on the fate of the Golan heights.

On Thursday Damascus welcomed an appeal by Mr. Peres to break the stalemate.

The official Al Baath newspaper said Mr. Peres seemed more open to making a deal than Mr. Rabin. But it complained that Mr. Peres had yet to commit to a full withdrawal from the Golan.

Opinion polls show most Israelis oppose leaving the strategic heights. Israel's Channel Two television said Mr. Peres, when he visits Washington in December, will expand on Mr. Rabin's formula that the depth of a withdrawal would equal the depth of the peace and normalisation of relations.

Mr. Barak also said that Israel would hold on to Jerusalem and parts of the West Bank in any final agreement with the Palestinians.

"We believe that it will be more correct and wise to separate from the Palestinians while keeping Jerusalem united under our sovereignty," Mr. Barak said.

Mr. Barak added that Israel would also maintain a hold in the Jordan Valley and retain West Bank settlement blocs southwest of Jerusalem and northeast of Tel Aviv.

As Mr. Peres began his first full day in office, the brother of Mr. Rabin's assassin was brought before a Tel Aviv court. Magistrate Dan Arbel said it was too hard to believe that Hagai Amir, 27, was unaware of his brother Yigal Amir's plan to kill the Israeli leader.

Judge Arbel ordered Hagai held for another eight days while police prepare charges against him. Police said last week that Hagai prepared a hallow-point bullet for Yigal, who has admitted shooting Mr. Rabin.

Police said another suspect told investigators that Mr. Peres was to have been the next target.

Police have arrested three Jewish religious students suspected of having put together a photomontage of Mr. Rabin in an SS Nazi uniform a month before his assassination, police said.

The picture was distributed at a right-wing rally in Jerusalem on Oct. 5 against Mr. Rabin's peace accords with the Palestinians.

Peace force to cover

(Continued from page 1)

Col. Vernon reported about 80 Bangladeshi peacekeepers were spending their last night in the northwest Bosnian camp, which was scheduled to be handed over to the British.

Another U.N. spokesman, Alexander Ivanko, said the U.N. Protection Force (UNPROFOR) had received reports of houses being burned down in Mrkonjic Grad and Sipovo in northwest Bosnia. Most homes in the area are empty after their residents fled fighting.

"Under the peace agreement these areas will go to the Bosnian Serbs. They currently are under HVO (Bosnian Croat militia) control. UNPROFOR is extremely concerned with these reports and hopes these cases of vandalism are... isolated," Mr. Ivanko said.

An HVO spokesman contacted by telephone denied the reports.

Although Mr. Ivanko said Friday's report covered only about a dozen houses, U.N. relief officials, some of whose staff have been able to transit the area, report widespread burning and looting of vacant Serbs properties in the area in recent weeks.

The incidents of looting and burning came as U.N. peacekeepers prepared to withdraw from Bosnia to make way for the NATO combat troops, or change helmets and come under NATO command. The NATO troops are expected to have much more aggressive rules of engagement than the U.N. force.

Diplomats have been fearing an attack on U.N. troops — but from the Bosnian Serbs side — in an attempt to deter the U.S. Congress from sending the planned 20,000 American troops in the NATO force.

The Muslim-led Bosnian government side, in contrast, keenly wants the NATO troops deployed.

A reliable source close to the Yugoslav government told Reuters on Friday that senior Bosnian Serbs official Momcilo Krajisnik was holding out against the Dayton peace deal after long talks with Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic.

Radovan Karadzic, president of the self-styled Bosnian Serb republic, had however signed an accord with Mr. Milosevic on Thursday saying he would implement the plan, the source said.

Another signatory was hardliner Biljana Plavsic, who warned on Wednesday that the Dayton agreement's demand for Serb areas of Sarajevo to be handed over to Muslim and Croat control could trigger a new war.

"As far as the Yugoslav government is concerned, Karadzic has signed and that's what matters," the source said.

Mr. Krajisnik was a Bosnian Serb representative at the talks in Dayton but called the peace agreement a betrayal of the Serb cause as soon as it was reached, saying maps dividing Bosnia had been drawn up without Bosnian Serbs being consulted.

Some Bosnian Serbs are furious at the handover of Sarajevo, the creation of a corridor through Serb territory from Sarajevo to the Muslim enclave of Gorazde, and the Dayton agreement's failure to widen the northeastern Posavina corridor, lifeline for the Serbs' northern territory.

Serb students in Serb areas of divided Sarajevo said they would lead a protest march against the Dayton plan on Saturday, the Bosnian Serb news agency SRNA said.

Lebanon seeks to win back key economic role at Barcelona summit

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanon is determined to win back its status as a key financial centre and the gateway to trade in the Middle East at a conference of European and Mediterranean countries which opens next week in Barcelona.

The two-day conference, which opens Monday and will be attended by foreign ministers from 27 countries, will seek to set a framework for economic development in the Mediterranean basin.

Lebanon is hoping that it will figure prominently in plans to lay the groundwork for a Mediterranean free trade area by 2010.

Beirut, a financial hub before the country's 1975-1990 civil war, is already in the midst of a multi-billion dollar post-war reconstruction boom, largely dependent on foreign grants, loans and investments.

Over the past three years Lebanon has received $400 million in loans and grants from the European Investment Bank to help finance post-war reconstruction schemes and repatriate Lebanese displaced by the war.

Lebanese industrialists are also hoping the Barcelona conference will provide them with much needed assistance.

"Our industry needs European technical and financial assistance," said Jacques Sarraf, president of the Association of Lebanese Industrialists, who also called for an opening up of markets in Syria and a lifting of U.N. sanctions on Iraq.

He pointed out that Syria was a key customer of Lebanon and had a potential market of 17 million people while Iraq used to absorb 40 per cent of Lebanese exports before the embargo, imposed after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Mr. Saraff called for comparative studies of the Arab World, Israel and Turkey, to be undertaken to examine the strong and weak points of their respective industries as part of plans to improve trade links in the region.

European aid for Lebanon is geared towards supporting the private sector, which has received $160 million from the International Financial Society, a World Bank subsidiary.

It is also aimed at reforming the administration, which was given $20 million by the World Bank.

Earlier this month, Lebanese and European Union (EU) officials began negotiations in Brussels for a partnership accord which could be intialled in June, said Harold Cool, charge d'affaires of the European Commission here.

"A Euro-Mediterranean partnership is probably the best way to create an Arab common market. Lebanon is Europe's passage to the Middle East and it will play a key role in an era of Arab-Israeli peace," he added.

Mr. Cool said Europe would help Lebanon restructure its administration, help create medium-sized and small industries, encourage the creation of joint ventures and help bolster technical education.

The European Union has decided to spend $6 billion in grants and about the same in loans over five years to set up political, economic and social partnership accords with 12 Mediterranean countries to pave the way for setting up a free trade zone by 2010.

In 1994, Lebanon exported goods worth $500 million, with 75 per cent going to other Arab countries and the rest to Russia and eastern European countries.

Paper products represented 26 per cent of all exports, while textiles came in second at 23 per cent and food products third at 20 per cent.

That same year, industry represented 14 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP), which was estimated at $9 billion, whereas it accounted for 22 per cent of GDP in 1975.

Around 200,000 people are employed in the industrial sector.

European Union seeks vast free trade zone in Mediterranean

BRUSSELS (AFP) — The European Union (EU), anxious to consolidate its political and economic presence on its southern flank, wants to establish a vast Mediterranean free trade zone by 2010.

The concept of a Euro-Mediterranean partnership will be officially unveiled at a meeting in Barcelona Monday and Tuesday of ministers from the European Union and 12 Mediterranean nations.

The Barcelona gathering could also be quickly followed by a Euro-Med summit, according to French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette.

The proposed partnership would link the 15-member European Union with Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Israel, the autonomous Palestinian territories, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Cyprus, Malta and Turkey.

Because of its already close ties to the European Union, Mauritania has also been invited to Barcelona.

EU members envisage spending 4.68 billion European Currency Units ($6 billion) to finance Mediterranean macro-economic projects from 1995 to 1999, of which $900 million would be allocated in 1996.

The goal would be the "progressive, flexible and voluntary" implementation of a free trade zone over the next 15 years, according to the EU programme.

Two Mediterranean countries, Cyprus and Malta, would be extended EU membership, an option that would not be available to other states in the region. Turkey has already reached agreement on a customs union with the EU.

Under the scheme, there would be a reciprocal opening of markets on both sides of the Mediterranean.

But free trade privileges would be limited to industrial goods and would exclude agricultural products, notably in light strong protectionist sentiment in Germany and several other EU members anxious to defend the interests of their farmers.

At present 56 per cent of Mediterranean manufacturing exports are destined for the EU market. For Israel, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey the EU share amounts to 70 per cent.

Fifty-two per cent of the goods imported by Mediterranean countries come from the European Union, although such sales represent only eight per cent of all EU exports.

The EU programme aims to promote economic development, social welfare and regional integration. Until now EU strategy has aimed at forging bilateral ties with individual countries, offering them trade privileges and financial assistance.

But the objective is also to establish the European Union — through dialogue — as a political force in the region in hopes that it will no longer be viewed exclusively as a financial benefactor.

Demographics explain the importance of the initiative for the Europeans. The Mediterranean region by 2035 is projected to have a population of 400 million people, enduring levels of prosperity sharply lower than those in Europe.

Already, 10 million immigrants living in the European Union are from the Mediterranean and the EU executive commission has warned: "Migratory pressure, if they are not carefully handled through cooperation with the countries concerned, could very easily provoke friction damaging to both international relations and to the immigrant populations themselves."

Asian Development Bank forecasts slower Asian growth

MANILA (AFP) — Overheating economies in China and most Asian tigers are forecast to slow to a more sustainable pace in the next two years, senior analysts from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) said Friday.

The Asian region's weighted average of 8.0 per cent growth in 1995 would slow to 7.4 per cent in 1996 and 7.1 per cent in 1997, the analysts said, describing it as a healthy trend that would lead to sustainable growth.

The region's economies grew by 8.3 per cent in 1994.

Despite the slowdown, Asia was also forecast to outpace other regions in economic expansion with growth up to three times that of Europe and Latin America, they added.

"The major reason is the decline in Chinese growth rate and also some slowdown in the NIEs (newly indus- [illegible]," ADB assistant chief economist John Malcolm Dowling said at a news briefing.

China's real gross domestic product (GDP) growth eased from 11.8 per cent in 1994 to 10 per cent in 1995 and was forecast to decline to 9.0 per cent in [illegible] and 8.5 per cent in [illegible] chief economist Visvanath Desai said.

Singapore's annual economic growth was projected to slip to 7.2 per cent in 1996 and 7.0 per cent in 1997 from growth of 10.1 per cent in 1994 and 8.0 per cent in 1995, Mr. Dowling said.

South Korea's annual growth rate was forecast to slide to 7.5 per cent and 7.0 per cent in 1996 and 1997 from 9.4 per cent in 1995.

Hong Kong's annual growth was expected to settle at 6.8 per cent in 1996 and 6.5 per cent in 1997 from 7.7 per cent this year while Taiwan's would increase slightly to 6.5 per cent in the next two years from 6.4 per cent in 1995.

Some South East Asian economies, particularly those of Indonesia and the Philippines, would grow faster.

But the South East Asian region's overall annual growth rate would be dragged down to 7.5 per cent and 7.3 per cent respectively in the next two years, from 7.9 per cent in 1995, due to economic easing in Thailand and Malaysia, ADB said.

Thailand is to slow down to 8.5 and 7.5 per cent in 1996 and 1997 from 8.6 per cent this year, while Kuala Lumpur would settle at 8.0 per cent and 7.5 per cent in the same period from a high of nine per cent this year.

Vietnam's annual gross domestic product growth was expected to drop to 8.8 per cent in 1996 and 8.5 per cent in 1997 from 9.0 per cent in 1995.

South Asia, on the whole, would grow by an average of 5.9 per cent in 1996, rising further to 6.2 per cent in 1997, the bank said.

Bangladesh's economy would grow from 3.9 per cent this year to 5.0 per cent in the next two years.

India's growth would climb 5.7 per cent this year to 6.0 per cent in 1996 and 6.3 per cent in 1997. Pakistan from 4.7 per cent to 6.0 per cent in the next two years, and Sri Lanka from 5.5 per cent to 6.0 per cent in 1996 and 6.5 per cent in 1997.

Mr. Dowling told reporters that the pace of expansion in China, the NIEs, as well as Thailand and Malaysia was "unsustainable" at present levels.

But he added that "overall, the growth rate is seven per cent for the region" and that "it's probably three times the growth rate for Latin America or Europe."

"So it's a very, very strong growth and it reflects adjustments to the overheating. We see it as a positive sign," he added.

Consumers less satisfied with quality of U.S. goods and services

DETROIT (AP) — U.S. consumers were less satisfied overall with the quality of goods and services in the past year, according to a survey.

"The data suggest that speculation and conventional wisdom about a significant improvement in the quality of goods and services is somewhat off-base," University of Michigan economist Claes Fornell said

Overall consumer satisfaction declined 1.1 per cent from October 1994 to last month as measured by the American Consumer Satisfaction index.

The latest economic sector surveyed, the broad manufacturing category of nondurables that includes products ranging from underwear to shampoo, showed a 0.5 per cent decline. The decline was led by a 5.6 per cent drop in consumer satisfaction with newspaper quality.

The quarterly survey of more than 10,000 consumers nationwide is conducted by the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor and the American Society for Quality Control in Milwaukee. It was begun one year ago.

Most nondurables examined in the latest survey showed no change from their high ranking, including processed food products, soft drinks, athletic shoes and personal care products such as toothpaste.

"These are all products for which quality is consistent and very little service is involved," Mr. Fornell said.

That was not the case with newspapers, in which many more factors enter into the customer's evaluation of quality, such as content, editorial policy, delivery and production, he said.

While manufacturing of nondurables is the highest-performing sector of the seven survyed, its stagnant performance is not a good sign, the index's creators said. Customers' expectations are rising faster than the quality of the goods and services they buy, said Jack West of the American Society for Quality Control.

"What we sense is that the heavier the service component of any product, the more dissatisfaction from customers. And it's because their expectations have been ratcheted up," Mr. West said.

"Companies like Federal Express and UPS, which have very high consumer satisfaction ratings, tend to raise the bar for everybody else," he added.

More dissatisfied customers are bad for the economy, which is why the index should prove useful with other statistical measurements as a tool to understand economic trends, the index's creators said.

The index tracks customer satisfaction with goods and services from 200 companies and government agencies and 40 industries. It scores one or two sectors each quarter on a 100-point scale.

The survey has a margin of error of 0.3 percentage points for the manufacturing results, and 0.2 percentage points for the overall ranking.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 1995

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Make a plan in the morning today which can gain your most important aims and then put it in motion after lunch for those aims to become a reality.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Plan how to get conditions improved so that you can have greater security for the days ahead, then put ideas to work and you will get your desires.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Get into the outside world early today and improve your status considerably. Handle personal matters in the evening with your loved ones.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Early this morning be out to new places for whatever your interests happen to be and later this evening you can handle civic duties well.

LEO :(July 22 to August 21) Daytime is fine for keeping any promises you have made to others and later today you can enjoy amusements you like in the company of loved ones.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Reach a better understanding with a partner since in the afternoon today you can handle your end of the deal nicely to the satisfaction of all concerned.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Get those tasks handled which are awaiting you in the morning today. Tonight be successful also in the social world with the assistance of knowledgeable individuals.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Romantic moments can be yours early in the day today, then get okay of close ties for whatever your purpose may be.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) This is a good day today to do what you prefer at home and then you can be out for a fun evening with your mate. Budget money wisely so you do not fall short.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You can take care of desk assignments nicely in the morning today and tonight you can be happy at home with close friends and loved ones.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Doing something early today to improve the looks of your home is wise in the morning. Later tonight, be with good friends for a good time.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Early today get ready to get into the activities you most like and then handle practical difficulties with wisdom and patience.

Birthstone of November: Topaz — Tiger's Eye

THE BETTER HALF

By Glasbergen

"You never remember to brush your teeth, so I put toothpaste on your burrito instead of cheese."

JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argirion

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

FREGI

LIPTO

UNJORI

MEETOL

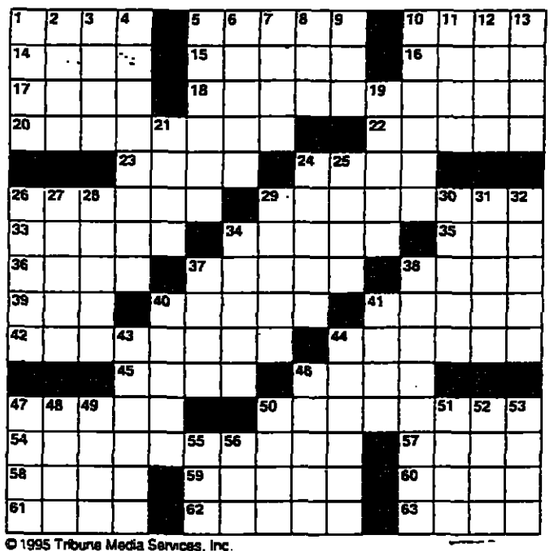
Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Print answer here :

(Answers Monday)

Yesterday's Jumbles: GLOVE SCARF CARPET MISUSE
Answer: Where whines come from — SOUR GRAPES

THE Daily Crossword by Florence Adler



ACROSS
1 Festival
5 Sandy elevation in water
10 Type of cheese
14 Footless
15 Scoop
16 Bathe
17 Fad
18 Idiotic
20 High-ranking clergymen
22 Show mercy
23 Copies
24 Four o'clock socials
26 Negligent
29 Empties
33 Escape by cleverness
34 Saying
35 Go-between: abbr.
36 Os
37 Ice pinnacle
38 Dugout
39 Musical instrument, briefly
40 Disappears gradually
41 Reformer Felix
42 Fastened
44 Catlike mammals
45 Charles Lamb
46 Italian river
47 Paris subway
50 Grabbed
54 Warned
57 Flying prefix
58 Spare
59 "She — have music..."
60 In good condition
61 Stopovers
62 Titter
63 Many years

DOWN
1 "The World According to —"
2 On — with (equal to)
3 Theater stall
4 Australian city
5 Lists of candidates
6 Sheol
7 At — (in disagreement)
8 "— My Sons"
9 Sheltered side
10 Expire
11 Facts
12 Assert
13 Ancient Asian
19 Canticle kin
21 Church part
24 Lone Star State
25 Heroic poem
26 Contradict
27 Elicit
28 French painter
29 Challenged
30 Under the — (in secret)
31 Plumed bird
32 Mixes
34 Jason's wife
37 Hindu garment
38 Favor
40 Criminal
41 "— She Sweet?"
43 Long-necked birds
44 Baby's bed
46 Anoint, old style
47 Bamako's land
48 Place of bliss
49 U.S. agent
50 Monarch
51 Certain sandwich
52 Ireland
53 Canines
55 Believer: suff.
56 Haggard novel

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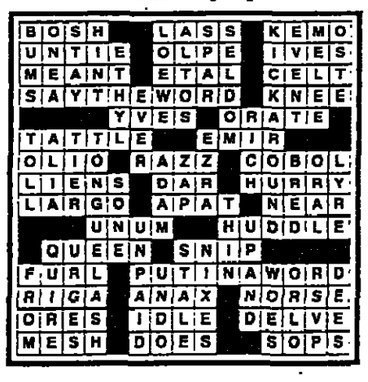
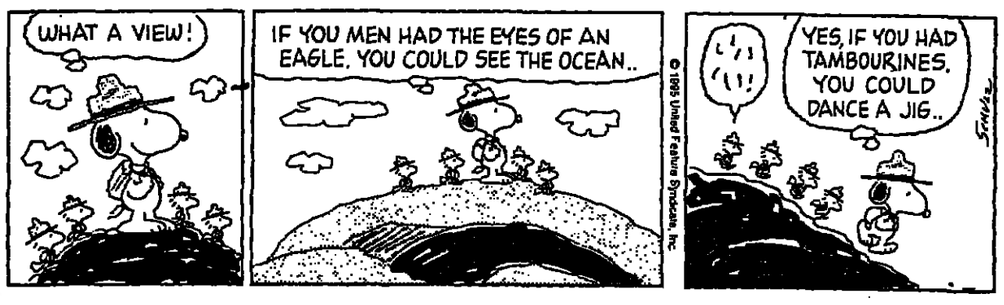
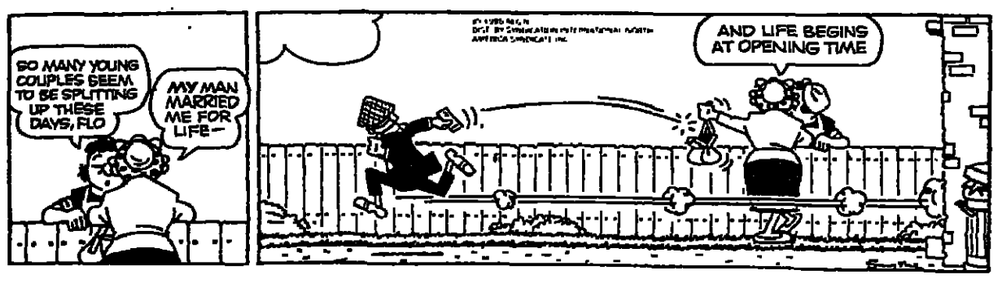
Thursday's puzzle solved



Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff

Liquidity crunch pressures prices down at AFM

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Prices continued a downward spiral for the third consecutive week at the Jordanian stock market because of a liquidity crunch resulting from a drain on capital away to short-term government certificates and primary issues, brokers said Thursday.

The week trend indicated a sharp decline in the overall annual performance in the market as the fiscal year drew to a close and many dealers feared negativity to dominate speculators in the new year.

"It is strange that prices are declining as the year is drawing to a close despite strong indicators that many companies have done very well during the year," said a broker, who, like other stock market dealers in Jordan, cannot be identified under standing guidelines.

The Amman Financial Market (AFM), as the Jordanian bourse is formally known, said in its weekly report that turnover for the week ending Thursday was 5.1 million dinars, up from the previous week's 2.7 million dinars.

The official AFM index drawn on 60 major companies closed at 153.2 points, reflecting a decline of two points or 1.3 per cent from the week's opening of 155.2 points, the report said.

Sectoral indices showed stocks of commercial banks and financial institutions slipping by 1.8 per cent during the week, services sector stocks by 0.7 per cent, industrials by 0.5 per cent and insurance stocks by 0.2 per cent.

Commercial banks and financial institutions had a turnover of 2.98 million dinars for the week, or 52.3 per cent of the weekly volume, followed by industrials which scored 1.68 million, or 32.87 per cent, services sector stocks with a turnover of 450,000 dinars, or 8.8 per cent, and insurance stocks which chalked up 1,300 dinars, accounting for 0.2 per cent.

The AFM report said 2.6 million shares changed during the week under 2,598 contracts, and the weekly average trading was 1.02 million dinars compared with the previous week's 700,000 dinars.

Stocks of 83 companies were traded during the week. As business closed, 10 had gained marginally, 61 slipped and 12 remained stable.

AFM dealers noted that the Central Bank of Jordan, acting to check the conversion of dinar deposits in commercial to dollars, was attracting AFM floor capital to short-term (three and six-month) certificates of deposits (CDs) in dinars with a one to 1.5 per cent higher return over dollars.

As such, the dealers said, the market was facing a liquidity crisis, particularly that the issuance of CDs worth 10 million dinars in the last two weeks came amid fresh issues by several well-established companies seeking to raise capital and the emergence of new firms which have floated several million dinars worth of primary stock.

The Central Bank is not showing any concern for the slip in the market either, saying its main concern is to defend the dinar and that, in any event, the stock market does not represent a "productive sector" in terms of economic growth.

"For the moment, the situation does not look very good in terms of a recovery in the stock market unless fresh capital is brought in," said a banking executive. "Everyone is hoping that some of the foreign companies which recently received government permission to enter the market will bring in new capital."

Financial Markets

Jordan Times In co-operation with Cairo Amman Bank

U.S. Dollar in International Markets

Currency	New York Close Date 22/11	Tokyo Close Date 23/11
Sterling Pound*	1.5637	1.5603**
Deutsche Mark	1.4104	1.4093
Swiss Franc	1.1367	1.1367**
French Franc	4.8605	4.8525**
Japanese Yen	100.96	100.78
European Currency Unit	1.3000	1.3023**

* USD Per STG
** European Opening @ 8:00 a.m. GMT

Eurocurrency Interest Rates — Date: 23/11/1995

Currency	1 MTH	3 MTHS	6 MTHS	12 MTHS
U.S. Dollar	5.56	5.67	5.43	5.37
Sterling Pound	6.50	6.43	6.37	6.31
Deutsche Mark	3.68	3.68	3.62	3.62
Swiss Franc	1.81	1.75	1.68	1.62
French Franc	5.35	5.40	5.78	5.58
Japanese Yen	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.25
European Currency Unit	5.34	5.37	5.31	5.21

Interbank bid rates for amounts exceeding U.S. Dollars 1,000,000 or equivalent.

Precious Metals — Date: 23/11/1995

Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm*	Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm
Gold	387.25	7.50	Silver	5.21	0.101

* 21 Karat

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin — Date: 23/11/1995

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.708	0.710
Sterling Pound	1.1042	1.1097
Deutsche Mark	0.5018	0.5043
Swiss Franc	0.6223	0.6254
French Franc	0.1456	0.1463
Japanese Yen*	0.7024	0.7059
Dutch Guilder	0.4481	0.4503
Swedish Krona	----	----
Italian Lira*	0.0445	0.0447
Belgian Franc	----	----

* Per 100

Other Currencies — Date: 23/11/1995

Currency	Bid	Offer
Bahraini Dinar	1.8520	1.8780
Lebanese Lira*	0.04370	0.04430
Saudi Riyal	0.1885	0.1898
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.3070	2.3670
Qatari Riyal	0.1932	0.1945
Egyptian Pound	0.2100	0.2200
Omani Riyal	1.8330	1.8410
UAE Dirham	0.1922	0.1933
Greek Drachma*	0.2835	0.3185
Cypriot Pound	1.5350	1.5930

* Per 100

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar on the London foreign exchange and bullion markets Friday.

One U.S. dollar	1.3534/44	Canadian dollar
	1.4120/30	Deutschemarks
	1.5812/22	Dutch guilders
	1.1376/86	Swiss francs
	29.02/06	Belgian francs
	4.8579/29	French francs
	1591.0/2.5	Italian lire
	100.90/00	Japanese yen
	6.5160/60	Swedish crowns
	6.2230/80	Norwegian crowns
	5.4704/80	Danish crowns
	1.4115/25	Singapore dollars
	0.7398/03	Australian dollars
	7.7343/53	Hong Kong dollars
One sterling	$1.5626/36	
One ounce of gold	$383.55/383.85	

Singapore charges Leeson over Barings debacle

SINGAPORE (R) — Singapore formally charged extradited former Barings trader Nick Leeson Friday with fraud and forgery linked to some $1.4 billion in losses which broke the venerable bank.

Leeson was not asked for a plea and judge Tan Siong Thye ordered the 28-year-old Briton, who was extradited from Germany on Thursday, sent to Tanah Merah prison until his next court appearance on Dec. 1.

The 11 charges against Leeson, who fled the island state in February as word of his colossal losses began to leak out, were read out in court by a court official.

It was a lengthy process rather than the five-minute remand hearing that Singapore legal experts had predicted.

Leeson's lawyer John Koh asked that two of the charges — which eventually took 45 minutes to be read out — be taken as read; but Judge Tan overruled him. "I know it's laborious, but we have to go through it," he said.

Singapore charges Leeson with manipulating trading records to siphon more than $1 billion of Barings' money into ill-fated futures trading while he was based in Singapore, and then of lying and forging documents to cover his trial.

The two main charges, packed with details of individual trades, allege Leeson forged documents to order an internal transfer of about $900 million.

Leeson, looking composed in a white shirt, red-patterned tie and dark trousers, said his first word in public since leaving a suburban Frankfurt jail on Wednesday when he was asked if he understood the charges. "Yes," he replied.

He has said nothing else.

He was protected from journalists by airline staff on the plane to Singapore.

He did not respond to journalists' shouted questions as he was whisked through the airport by armed police.

No date has been set for Leeson's trial and officials provided no clues at the court when it might begin.

CAD chief Lawrence Ang said his officers needed time to question Leeson after the extradition from Germany, where he was arrested in early March after a six-day global manhunt.

"As the accused has just been brought back to Singapore and CAD officers have not had sufficient opportunity to interview him, I'm applying that his plea not be taken at this stage," Mr. Ang told the court before the charges were read out.

Mr. Koh told reporters on the plane that flew Leeson and his wife Lisa back to Singapore that he expected the trial to start before year end.

Lisa Leeson did not attend the 75-minute court hearing.

After his detention in Frankfurt on March 2, Leeson fought hard to be extradited to Britain for trial in London, Barings' headquarters.

He opposed extradition to Singapore, originally saying he feared a show trial in a country with a tough criminal code.

Punishments can include caning for more than 80 offences. Singapore also hangs convicted killers and drug traffickers.

But none of those punishments would apply to Leeson, who faces a maximum 14 years in jail, and in October he abruptly dropped an appeal against extradition to Singapore.

His lawyers have denied vehemently that Leeson's sudden willingness to be tried in Singapore indicated a deal with the authorities.

Nevertheless, Singapore legal experts say that if he cooperates with the authorities and pleads guilty, Leeson can expect a jail term of between six months and two years.

They also predict the trial could be short, despite the financial technicalities, if Leeson does plead guilty.

One expert predicted the trial could be over in a day.

Business Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

Work on Ras Al Naqab-Aqaba road to begin next month

☆☆ IMPLEMENTATION OF the international road project between Ras Al Naqab and Aqaba connecting the port city to various regions in the Kingdom and the neighbouring Arab countries is scheduled to start next month. The project, which carries a total cost of JD34 million, will facilitate cargo transportation and passenger traffic in addition to the activation of tourism among the countries of the region. A joint venture between two Italian companies will be implementing the project in two stages, the first of which will be a 43-kilometre stretch and the second a 28-kilometre section. Upon completion of this project in the last quarter of 1998, the road between Ras Al Naqab and Aqaba will be a four-lane highway (Al Dustour).

More time to pay for licences

☆☆ LANDLORDS WHO have set up unlicensed buildings were given until May 1, 1996 to pay the licensing fees in instalments to the Municipality of Greater Amman (Al Ra'i).

120 owners of public cars take government offer

☆☆ THE DEPARTMENT of Customs has approved replacing 120 public cars free of customs, in accordance with the Cabinet decision of June 6, 1995 to modernise public transport cars. The owners of the old cars have handed them to the customs centres (Al Ra'i).

Investor rents old market

☆☆ THE MUNICIPALITY of Greater Amman approved leasing all stores at the old vegetable market in Al Widhat to a Jordanian investor for an annual JD 752,000 rent (Al Ra'i).

Saudi milk arrives

☆☆ IMPORT AND export operations are returning to normal between Jordan and Saudi Arabia as a shipment of fresh Saudi milk arrived in the country in implementation of a Jordanian-Saudi trade protocol. The milk, which is exempted from customs, will be distributed from today (Al Aswaq).

Who will head the Central Bank after Nabulsi?

☆☆ FINANCIAL and banking circles are speculating who would succeed Central Bank Governor Mohammad Nabulsi, who has submitted his resignation as of Dec. 31, 1995. However, among those who have better chances to the top post are Michael Marto, currently the deputy governor, and Basel Jardaneh, who is now finance minister. Other names being mentioned are Bassam Saket and Jawad Anani. Dr. Marto and Mr. Jardaneh reportedly belong to the same monetorist school of thought as Dr. Nabulsi. The Cabinet will decide on the resignation within the coming few weeks. The resignation has come as a result of a decision to place the Central Bank under the scrutiny of the Audit Bureau. Dr. Nabulsi fought hard to preserve the independence of the Central Bank but, having failed to keep it so, he had taken a final decision to resign. During a gathering, the governor was reported to have said that the scrutiny by the Audit Bureau was the "straw that broke the camel's back."

Investment firm formed to boost Palestinian self-rule

DUBAI (AFP) — An investment company with $250 million in capital has been formed to boost the fledgling economy of the Palestinian self-rule areas, a Palestinian businessman has said.

Salam International Investment Limited will build a 275-room Marriot hotel in the Gaza Strip as its first project, Jamal Abu Issa, a businessman based in the Gulf state of Qatar, told a press conference here.

Participating in the $62 million project to be completed in 1998 are the U.S. firm GRDG, the Marriot chain and Salam International, as well as the Palestinian Authority which agreed to sell the land for $15 million.

The investment firm also plans to set up a satellite communications network in the West Bank and Gaza as well as a Palestinian bank "to provide financing to small and medium enterprises in Palestine," he said.

Mr. Abu Issa said Salam International has already 300 shareholders, including 200 Palestinians, Qataris and citizens of the United Arab Emirate who have subscribed to shares worth a total of $25 million.

Shares are being offered to the public until Dec. 31, 1995, for a minimum of $10,000.

"We expected to go to 500 (shareholders) by the end of December," he said, adding they are expected to subscribe to shares worth $40 million.

Gulf countries like Qatar and the United Arab Emirates would contribute capital, he added. The authorised capital of the project is $250 million, he said.

Mr. Abu Issa said the Palestinian Authority headed by PLO chief Yasser Arafat contributed $10 million — the maximum for a single shareholder — but that it would have no influence on the company's decision.

The businessman who has Qatari nationality said the company was based in Qatar so that it would not come under pressure from the Palestinian Authority.

Salam International is the third investment firm for the Palestinian territories to be created in the UAE in the last two years.

The others are the Palestine Development and Investment Incorporation, with $200 million in capital, and the Arab Palestinian Investment Co. (APIC), with $100 million in capital.

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Greeks beat arch-rivals in basketball

ATHENS (R) — Magic moves by American forward Walter Berry helped Greek champions Olympiakos crush Turkish champions Ulker 92-76 in the European Clubs' Basketball Championship in a match the Greeks dominated.

Berry sunk an impressive 39 points fouling out two of his personal guards and spreading panic to the Turkish defence which could do little to control him.

The Greeks kept an average 12-point lead throughout the group a semifinal series encounter and were the masters of the boards thanks to Berry and giant pivot Panayotis Fasoulas who added 18 points.

Olympiakos' frontline supremacy forced Ulker to shoot from outside the D and Turkish international guard Orhun Ene did well netting 22 points including four 3-pointers.

Former Philadelphia forward Charles Sakelford contributed 18 but lost steam in the second half leaving the Turks with no classic rebounder.

Hundreds of riot police were stationed inside the packed 13,000 peace and friendship hall fearing clashes between the fans of the two eternal Balkan rivals but all went well as Olympiakos put victory beyond dispute early on.

It was a clean sweep for Greek teams in Europe's top competition with Panathinaikos beating Croatia's Cibona 79-61 in a Group B qualifier.

Meanwhile Barcelona scored a much needed home win against arch-rivals Real Madrid 88-80 in a European Champions Clubs' Group B match in only their second clash in European competition.

Barcelona overcame injury problems and the memory of their defeat against real in domestic league play exactly a month ago and won despite being without injured Quique Andreu and Jose Luis Galilea through injury.

Ferran Martinez played with his knee in a bandage and Darryl Middleton was absent because he wasn't registered for European competition.

Madrid had to do without key player Mike Smith who will have an operation on his knee later this week and is expected to be out of competition for three months.

Barcelona now has two victories and one defeat in the European Championship, while Madrid has one win and two defeats.

Ukrainian figure skaters spoil American Thanksgiving Day

GELSENKIRCHEN, Germany (R) — Ukraine's Viacheslav Zagorodniuk spoiled Thanksgiving for Americans, Scott Davis and Todd Eldredge by winning the men's short programme at the Nations Cup Grand Prix figure skating competition on Thursday.

A bronze medallist at the 1994 World Championships, Zagorodniuk produced a crisp, error-free programme earning him marks of 5.8 to 5.9 from six-of-seven judges for both technical merit and artistic impression.

Zagorodniuk's classical performance was in sharp contrast to Davis' upbeat techno-pop routine which was choreographed by Barry Lather, who is better known for his work on Michael and Janet Jackson videos..

Seventh at the last two world championships, the 23-year-old American's effort also impressed the judges who placed him second just ahead of Eldredge, the silver medallist at last year's worlds.

"Thanksgiving will almost be as good both Todd and I are really happy," said Davis. "Anytime you're in the top three after the short programme you're in the money.

"Now it just comes down to tomorrow."

Olympic champion Alexi Urmanov of Russia, already the winner of one Grand Prix this season with a victory at Skate Canada, has his work cut out for him if he hopes for a second after a flawed short programme left him a disappointing fourth.

European champions Mandy Woetzel and Ingo Steuer of Germany drew loud applause from the audience in winning Paris short programme.

Marina Eltsova and Andrei Bushkov of Russia, winners at Skate America and second at Skate Canada are second followed by Kyoko Ina and Jason Dungjen of the United States in third.

In ice dance, Anjelika Kryova and Oleg Ovsiannikov of Russia, fifth at last year's World Championships, lead after the compulsory routines.

The Ukraine's Irina Romanova and Igor Yaroshenko are second with another Russian couple Irina Lobacheva and Ilia Averbukh third.

World Cup seeks real Von Gruenigen, Tomba and snow

PARK CITY (R) — Is this the real Michael Von Gruenigen? Will the real Alberto Tomba show up? And are those two thin strips of white really the snow?

These are the main questions to be answered in two men's World Cup ski races this weekend, the giant slalom on Saturday and slalom on Sunday.

Snow is painfully sparse in Utah's Wasatch Mountains, but organisers employed snowmaking to lay down twin courses on the barren slopes, creating two narrow white ribbons like the centre stripes of a highway against a background of brown.

On this odd-looking scene, Von Gruenigen will try to prove he is not just another racer riding an early-season hot streak that is sure to cool.

In five previous World Cup seasons, the 28-year-old Swiss won precisely two World Cup races. This season he has already equalled that, capturing both the giant slaloms contested so far.

In addition, he was third across the finish in last Sunday's slalom at Vail, Colorado, before officials discovered he had missed a gate. That mishap caused Von Gruenigen to slip behind Lasse Kjus of Norway in the early overall standings, 206-200.

The question about Tomba, the defending overall champion, is whether he has yet honed his body sufficiently to regain the dominance he showed last season.

Tomba skipped the first race of the season at Tignes, France, then came to the Vail races admittedly out of condition. He struggled on the difficult courses at Vail's high elevation, finishing third in the slalom and seventh in the giant slalom.

"I need another two or three weeks to be truly strong again," Tomba said between very deep breaths.

The Italian star also revealed he has no real ambition to defend his title. Instead, he will concentrate on winning the first World Championship gold medal of his career, along with the classic events in Europe.

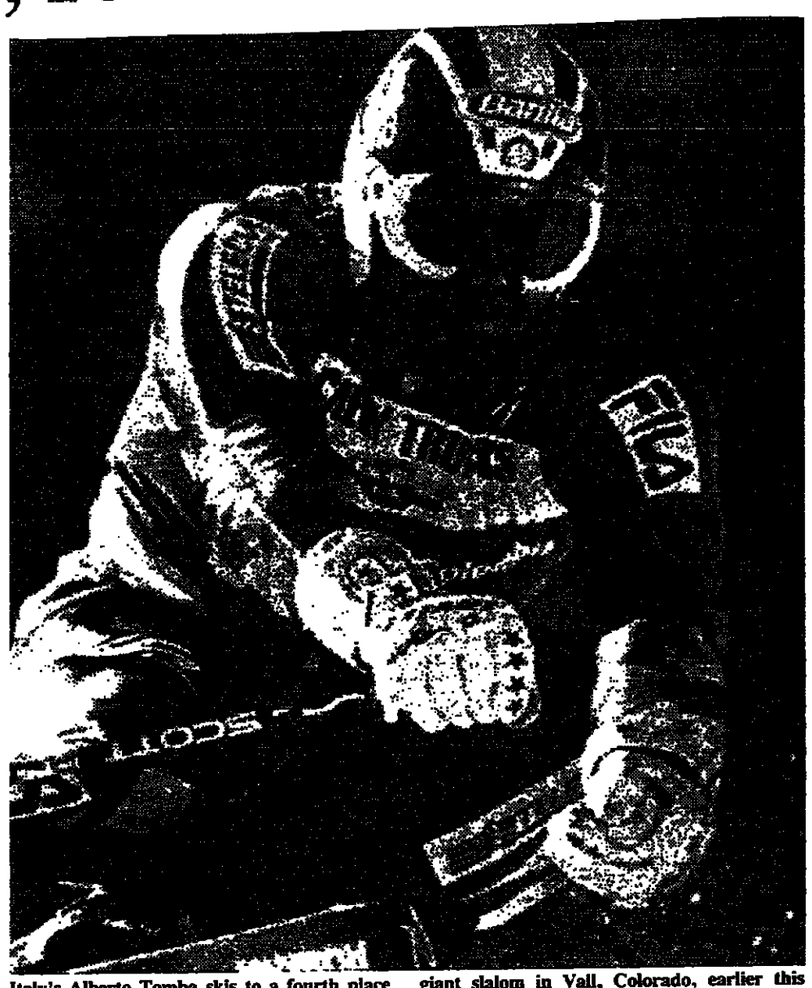
Like most of the racers, Tomba remained in Colorado to continue training and wasn't to arrive in Park City until Friday.

The Vail training proved disastrous for Kjetil Andre Aamodt of Norway, the 1994 World Cup champion. Aamodt injured his right knee Wednesday and will miss the next month of racing.

Also uncertain for the Park City race is five-time champion Marc Girardelli of Luxembourg. Girardelli sprained his ankle last week and has difficulty wearing a ski boot.

The warm weather in Park City is expected to spark more controversy over a new rule on the start order for second runs.

World Cup officials are attempting to reverse the start order of the top 30 finishers after the first run. Leading racers oppose the plan.



Italy's Alberto Tomba skis to a fourth place finish in the first heat of the men's World Cup giant slalom in Vail, Colorado, earlier this week (Reuters photo)

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANNAH HIRSCH

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WHO NEEDS ACES — II?

North-South vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH
♠ Q 10 6
♡ 6 5 3
◇ J 6 5 2
♣ K Q 7

WEST
♠ J 9 5 3
♡ J 8 2
◇ 3
♣ A J 8 6 4

EAST
♠ 8 7 4
♡ 4
◇ Q 10 9 8
♣ 10 9 5 3 2

SOUTH
♠ A K 2
♡ A K Q 10 9 7
◇ A K 7 4
♣ Void

The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
2♡	Pass	3♡	Pass
6♡	Pass	Pass	Pass

Opening lead: 3 of ◇

The year 1933 was memorable. On the international scene, Hitler came to power. In bridge, one of your columnists was born and this hand was dealt in the club championship pair event at the Franklin Bridge club in Philadelphia.

At most tables the final contract was six hearts, sometimes reached on the auction shown. At no table was the contract fulfilled unless West chose to lead the ace of clubs.

More often than not, the opening lead was the singleton diamond. As long as the defenders did not get careless, declarer could not find a way to avoid the loss of two tricks — either two diamonds or the ace of clubs and the fourth spade. It was only in the postmortem that a way to get home was uncovered.

Suppose that, after winning the first trick with the king of diamonds, declarer draws trumps in three rounds and then continues with the ace of diamonds. When West shows out, declarer is in position to take advantage of the fact that West has only black cards remaining.

Declarer next cashes the king of spades, then leads the deuce and finesses dummy's 10. When that wins the trick, declarer plays the king of clubs and discards the ace of spades from hand!

If West ducks, that's declarer's 12th trick, but winning is no better. West can only return a black card, bringing the board back to life, and the table's two black queens allow declarer to stuff the two losing diamonds from hand and land the slam.

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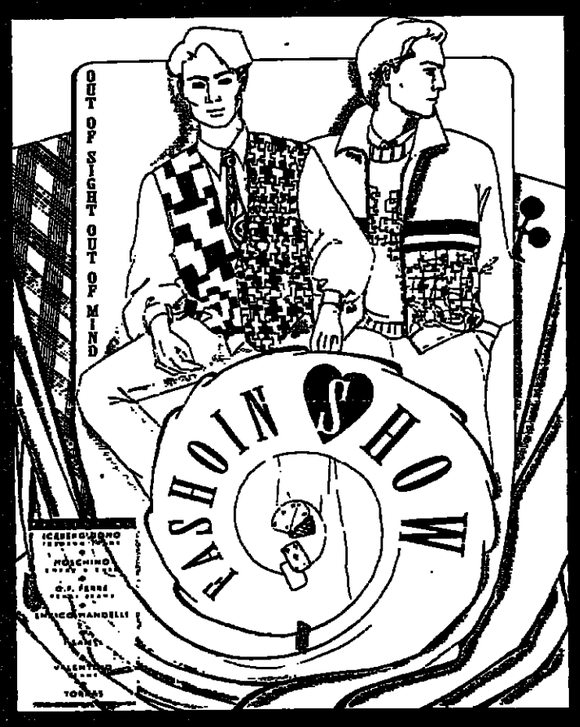

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in
A Woman Who shook the Throne of Egypt
(Arabic)
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 8:30

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A Woman Who shook the Throne of Egypt
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World weightlifting championships

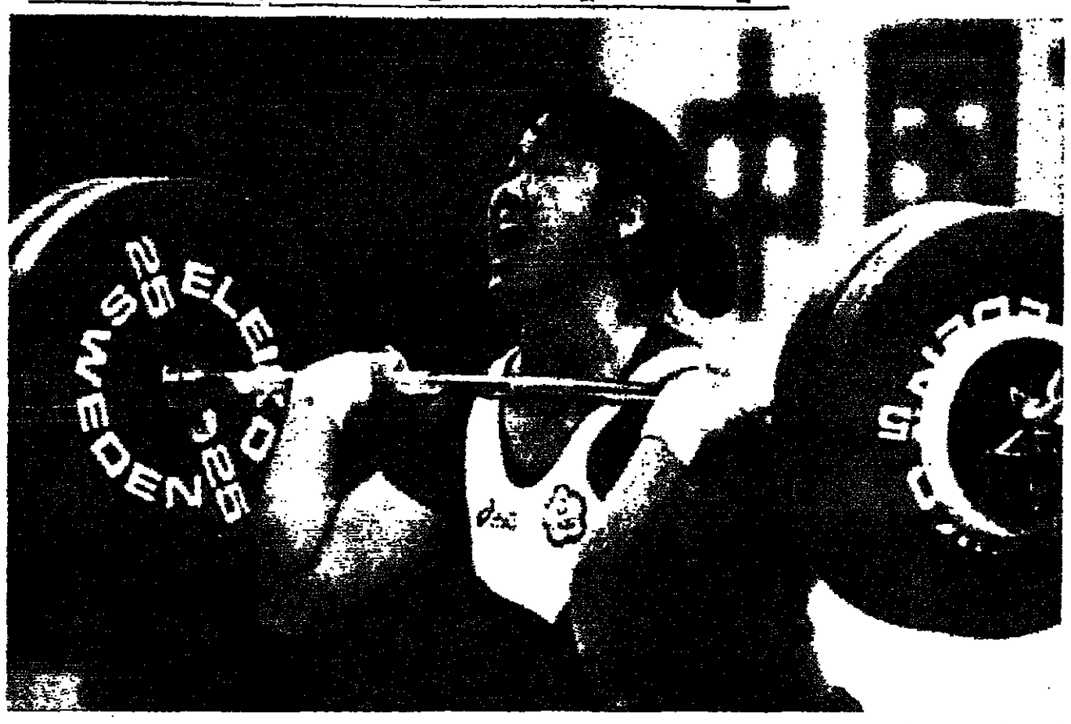
Taiwan's Chen sets new records

GUANGZHOU, China (Agencies) — Taiwan's Chen Shu-Chi set two world records in the women's 83 kg category at the World Weightlifting Championships on Friday in the clean and jerk and overall score.

Chen beat the previous record in the clean and jerk by 2 kg and bettered the overall total by 2.5 kg.

Chen beat her own world record of 133 kg, set at the Asian Championships in South Korea in July, when she lifted 133.5 kg in the clean and jerk section. She then successfully lifted 135 kg.

With an overall score of 240 kg in both the snatch and clean and jerk sections, she also broke the overall total world record of 237.5 kg, set by China's Zhang Xiaoli in October 1994.



Taiwan's Chen Shu-Chi shows the strain as she pulls 135 kg barbells to her shoulder during women's 83 kg category clean and jerk of the World Weightlifting Championships November 24. Chen broke her own clean and jerk world record twice and set a new record of 135 kg, she also a new world record of total weight of 240 kg. (Reuters photo)

Drug-offending countries buy their way off blacklist

Weightlifing may now be doing a better job of identifying and penalysing individual drug users, but it is still not too difficult for the worst offenders to escape punishment.

Four countries facing suspension for multiple drug infractions were allowed to compete at the world championships underway in this southern Chinese city after paying $50,000 fines.

If they had not paid, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Russia and Armenia would also have missed the Atlanta Olympics next year.

Self-interest almost requires that the International Weightlifting Federation (IFW) provide an escape hatch to its tough rule requiring countries with more than two positive tests a year to be suspended from competition for 12 months.

Bulgaria is the most successful nation in the history of the sport.

Kazakhstan, Russia and Armenia formerly competed as part of the Soviet Union, weightlifting's second most dominant force.

Between them Bulgaria and the former Soviet Union have collected more world championship gold medals than the rest of the world combined.

Bulgaria has won 318 gold medals, the Soviet Union 170, while Poland trails a distant third with 44.

A hard-and-fast rule that kept Bulgaria or the former Soviet republics out of the sport's premier events would render them meaningless.

Instead, Tamas Ajan, IWF general secretary, said he had spoken severely with officials from the four offending nations.

"I gave them a very strong warning," he said.

Although most amateur sports federations would have a tough time finding $50,000 to spare in chronically tight budgets, the four countries nabbed this year all managed to pay.

The rumoured source of the cash? Retired East bloc weightlifters said to be involved in the business mafia now flourishing in the ruins of bankrupt socialist economies.

Sixty-four lifters from 31 countries were found positive for banned drugs this year, all but two for anabolic steroids.

All were banned for life.

Weightlifting is the only Olympic sport that bans drug offenders for life for a first offence.

The IWF has so far conducted 1,031 tests in 91 countries this year, including 400 unannounced out-of-competition tests.

Cowboys beat Chiefs, Lions outlast Vikings

IRVING, Texas (R) — In a Thanksgiving Day matchup of the NFL's two top teams, the Dallas Cowboys prevailed Thursday when Troy Aikman threw for 192 yards and two touchdowns in a 23-12 win over the Kansas City Chiefs.

The Cowboys and the Chiefs now share the league's best record at 10-2, but the combination of Aikman and receiver Michael Irvin in a game billed as a possible Super Bowl preview left Chiefs coach Marty Schottenheimer in awe.

"Nobody does it better than Aikman and Irvin," said Schottenheimer.

"We proved we are better than the two best teams in the AFC, Oakland last week and Kansas City this week," said Dallas defensive back Deion Sanders.

Dampening the Cowboys' celebration was running back Emmitt Smith's knee injury, apparently a sprain, in the third quarter.

Kansas City's seven-game winning streak ended, but it still leads Oakland (8-3) in the AFC West.

Dallas scored on its first two possessions. Smith capped the initial drive with a 15-yard burst up the middle for his 21st rushing touchdown of the year and 96th of his career. Smith totalled 56 yards on 18 carries.

Irvin made it 14-0 with 29 seconds left in the first period when he made a juggling one-handed catch in the end zone amid two chiefs defenders.

"I didn't get a good look at Michael's touchdown, but I'm still wondering how he caught it," said Aikman, who completed 21-of-29 passes.

Irvin later recorded his 500th career reception in the second quarter and had 11 receptions for 121 yards. It was his 10th 100-yard receiving game of the season, tying the NFL record set by Houston's Charley Hennigan in 1961.

The Chiefs scratched back with Lin Elliott field goals of 34 and 37 yards in the second quarter before Dallas made it 21-6 in the third on a brilliant 33-yard touchdown play by tight end Jay Novacek, who snared a short slant pass, hurdled over cornerback Mark Collins and ran to the end zone.

Kansas City answered with a 45-yard touchdown strike on a deep slant from Steve Bono to Lake Dawson with 2:29 left in the third period. The two-point conversion attempt failed and the chiefs were held scoreless the rest of the way.

Injuries hurt both sides.

In addition to Smith, Cowboys centre Ray Donaldson fractured his right ankle and punter John Jett left in the second period with lower back spasms.

Chiefs linebacker Derrick Thomas left in the third quarter with a groin injury.

Bono went 20-for-36 for 276 yards while Tamarick Vanover had four receptions for 85 yards.

"I want another shot at them," said Bono. "They were ahead 14-0 before we even got started."

In Pontiac, Michigan, Scott Mitchell passed for a team-record 410 yards and four touchdowns, two of them to Brett Perriman, as the Detroit Lions beat the Minnesota Vikings 44-38 for their third successive win.

The Lions, playing on Thanksgiving for the 55th straight year, got to the .500 mark for the season at 6-6.

NFL ROUNDUP

Minnesota had its three-game winning streak halted and fell into a tie with Detroit in the NFC Central. Detroit and the Vikings trail Green Bay (7-4), Chicago (6-5) and Tampa Bay (6-5).

Mitchell, who sprained his right ankle Sunday, was 30-of-45 and intercepted once.

"I was still hurting from Sunday, but we scored on the first two possessions so I decided to try and go all the way," he said. "If you are a bit hurt you sometimes focus more."

Perriman tied the club record with 12 catches and set a personal high with 153 yards.

Herman Moore caught eight passes for 127 yards and Johnnie Morton seven for 102 for the Lions. It was the first time the Lions had three receivers over the 100-yard mark in one game.

Barry Sanders, limited to one yard in 10 carries in the first half, finished with 138 yards on 24 carries.

"They kept the safety up, they committed to stopping the run so we got into a pass scrimmage," said Lions head coach Wayne Fontes. "Our receivers are very difficult to cover when a team focuses on Barry Sanders. In the second half they played some pass defence and then Barry went crazy."

SPORTS IN BRIEF

FISA to move to 'Olympic capital'

GENEVA (R) — The international Rowing Federation (FISA) said on Friday it was moving to Lausanne next year to be closer to Olympic headquarters. The federation said it had chosen Lausanne because of its proximity to the International Olympic Committee and for the tax advantages the city offered to international sports bodies. The move from Oberhofen in central Switzerland means the governing bodies of nine of the 31 sports on the Olympic programme will be based in Lausanne, which has been named the "Olympic capital." FISA said it was creating a new post of "executive director" as part of an attempt to "develop and extend the range of FISA's commercial activities in order to expand FISA's financial resources."

Ferguson released from jail

GLASGOW (R) — Scotland and Everton striker Duncan Ferguson was released from jail on Friday after serving exactly half his three-month sentence for headbutting an opponent. The 23-year-old player was released before dawn from Glasgow's Barlinnie Jail and whisked away in a Limousine provided by his club. Its windows were blacked out to thwart photographers. Ferguson, who won Football Association Cup Winners' medal with Everton last May, was the first international in Britain to be jailed for an on-field assault on another player. Ferguson, who was playing for Glasgow Rangers at the time of the assault, told the court which convicted him that he bitterly regretted headbutting Raith Rovers defender John McStay in a Scottish Premier Division match in April 1994. It was his fourth court conviction. He was on probation for a previous offence at the time of the assault.

Rubin stands in for Seles

VALENCIA, Spain (AFP) — Chanda Rubin will replace the injured Monica Seles in the United States team to play Spain in the Fed Cup final here this weekend. Captain Billie Jean King picked the WTA's 13th ranked player when Seles, the world co-number one, withdrew because of tendinitis. Seles pulled out of two tournaments earlier this month, including the WTA Championships in New York. King picked Rubin ahead of Martina Navratilova and Amy Frazier, who were the other reserves. Rubin, who entered the top 20 for the first time in July, joins Lindsay Davenport, Gigi Fernandez and Mary Joe Fernandez in the team for the final. She reached the finals of two WTA tournaments this year, at Eastbourne, England, and Manhatten Beach, California. She lost to Nathalie Tauziat of France in the Eastbourne final and to Conchita Martinez, who will be playing for the Spanish team here, in Manhatten Beach, after beating Gabriela Sabatini of Argentina and Arantxa Sanchez Vicario — another of Spain's Fed Cup team.

Kafelnikov leads Russian team

MOSCOW (R) — World number six Yevgeny Kafelnikov was named in Russia's team for next Month's Davis Cup final against the United States, removing any doubts that injury might force him out. Kafelnikov, 21, has said he might need an operation on a niggling knee injury but has kept playing despite the problem. Andrei Chesnokov, Alexander Volkov and Andrei Olkhovsky were also named in the team to face the Americans in Moscow from December 1 to 3. Pete Sampras and Andre Agassi, who have disputed the world number one ranking throughout the year, lead the U.S. challenge. They played together in both the quarter-final victory over Italy and the semifinal win over Sweden. Jim Courier, who has also held the number one ranking, and Todd Martin complete the U.S. line-up.

No NZ money for yacht race

WELLINGTON (AFP) — New Zealand's government will not use tax payers' money to defend the 2000 race here of the America's Cup, yachting's premier trophy, acting Prime Minister Don McKinnon said Friday. Sir Peter Blake, head of cup holders Team New Zealand on Thursday said. "Public money" should be used to develop facilities for the race, but was unable to give estimates. However, he said the cost would be far outweigned by the benefits to the country of hosting the defence. New Zealand won the race this year in San Diego. But McKinnon said the government would not provide money. "It is simply not the government's role to be writing out cheques. "We see it as an essentially private initiative and very much an Auckland-based venture," McKinnon said in a statement.

Sandpit favourite for Japan Cup

TOKYO (R) — Brazilian-bred Sandpit faces the difficult task of stopping a Japanese winning streak in the $3.88-million Japan Cup, one of the world's richest horse races, on Sunday.

The six-year-old Sandpit, who performed well in gallops this week, has emerged as the favourite among the nine foreign runners for the event at Tokyo racecourse.

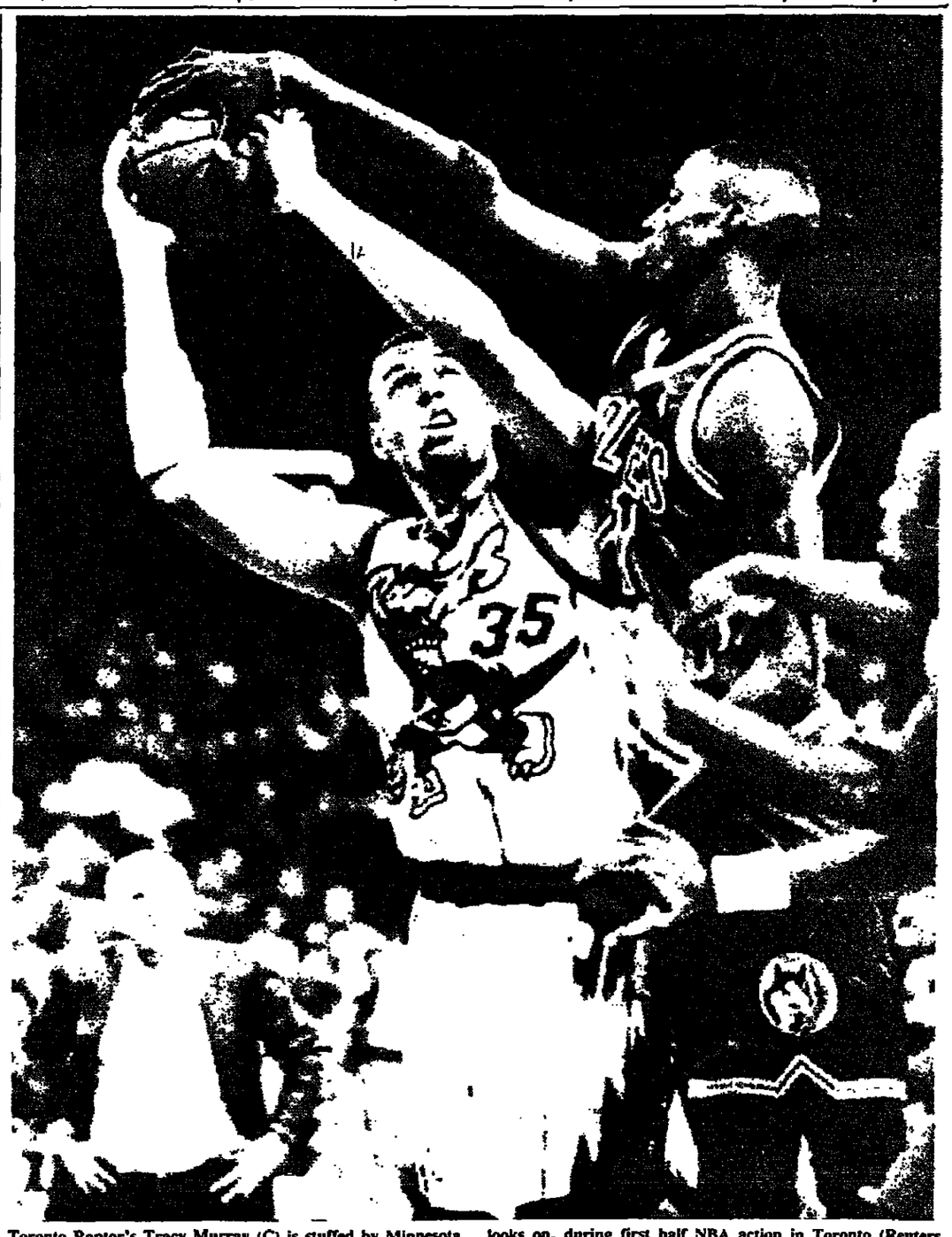
Sandpit, ridden by Japanese-American Corey Nakatani, will try to end a three-year local winning streak and to make up for his poor showing in last year's race when he finished fifth despite starting as the 7-2 favourite.

"His training is going smoothly as scheduled. He is in high spirits and his condition is fine," trainer Richard Mandella said.

Sandpit has performed well this season, winning four times and finishing second three times out of eight starts.

Japanese gelding Marvelous Crown won last year's race, becoming the third successive local horse to triumph in the 1½-mile (2.4-km) event.

But Sandpit's status as favourite may prove a jinx. No favourite has won the Japan Cup for 14 years and the last foreigner to triumph, American Golden Pheasant in 1991, was a 17-1 longshot.



Toronto Raptor's Tracy Murray (C) is stuffed by Minnesota Timberwolve's Kevin Garnett (R), as T-Wolves coach Bill Blair looks on, during first half NBA action in Toronto (Reuters photo)

Elie leads Rockets past Pacers

INDIANAPOLIS (R) — Mario Elie led the Houston Rockets with eight points down the stretch Thursday for a 115-108 comeback victory over the Indiana Pacers, their seventh victory in a row.

Elie scored 18 points in all, Kenny Smith had 17 and Hakeem Olajuwon and Sam Cassell added 15 apiece as the two-time NBA champion Rockets moved a half-game ahead of the Chicago Bulls for the best record in the NBA.

"We don't blow anybody out, we just try to keep it close the last five minutes," said Cassell.

"Our balanced scoring makes it hard for anybody to beat us. This team is better than the last two because of desire."

Houston trailed 103-98 with 4:17 to play, but went on a 12-0 run — two Olajuwon jumpers, Elie's three-point play and jumper and a Cassell three-pointer — to take a 110-103 lead with just under two minutes remaining.

Dale Davis hit a free throw and Antonio Davis scored a basket to cut the deficit back to 110-106 with 50 seconds to play, but Elie nailed a three-point field goal with 28 seconds left to put the Rockets back up by seven.

Reggie Miller had 24 points and Derrick McKey finished with 19 for the Pacers, who have not beaten Houston at home since November 1991.

"I think they played pretty good and made good shots," said Pacers head coach Larry Brown. "The second half they made a lot of big threes. We had some key turnovers down the stretch."

The pacers had a 41-39 advantage in rebounding and had 30 assists, including 11 by Mark Jackson.

"They knocked down the shots when they had to," said Jackson. "They're great when they scramble and that's what they do best. You have to give their defence credit, they didn't let anything keep them from getting the job done."

Houston's reserves outscored the Indiana bench, 44-29.

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Egypt criticises Pakistan over militant groups

CAIRO (Agencies) — Egypt accused Pakistan on Friday of failing to take a tough stand against militants but said it expected rapid extraditions after the attack on its embassy in Islamabad.

"To allow these criminals to carry out terrorist attacks and allow them freedom of action constitute a weak point for any state," Interior Minister Hassan Al Alfi told the newspaper Al Hayat.

"The least that a state where terrorist incidents have taken place can do" is make rapid extraditions, he said.

General Alfi said he expected Islamabad to extradite the culprits of Sunday's bomb attack on the Egyptian embassy that killed 17 people and was claimed by three militant groups in Egypt.

pakistan's ambassador to Cairo, Mansoor Alam, said the authorities had already agreed on the principle of extraditing 20 Egyptians, most of whom are now under arrest.

Islamabad has had an extradition agreement with Cairo since July 1994 and so far handed over some 15 Egyptian Islamic militants.

But Mr. Alam told the Cairo newspaper Al Akhbar that it was difficult for Pakistani authorities to control the mountainous border region with Afghanistan, where some 2,800 militants are based.

Police said meanwhile that the focus of investigation had switched from the International Justice Group to Al Jihad. A third group, Gamaa Al Islamiyah, also claimed the bombing.

The three groups, under mounting pressure on the home front, are trying to unite, Gen. Alfi said.

His Pakistani counterpart Naseerullah Babar said Thursday that the authorities had arrested 12 suspects in connection with the blast — six Egyptians, two Jordanians and four Afghans.

The authorities are also looking for four Afghan employees of the Egyptian embassy who have been missing since the attack.

But Mr. Babar also ordered an inquiry into why there had been a delay in the delivery of a letter from Egypt to the Pakistani foreign office warning of possible terrorist attacks against Egyptian targets.

The note was received only 48 hours before the blast.

The Jihad group offered on Thursday what it said was evidence that it bombed the Egyptian embassy.

A Jihad statement sent to an international news agency in Cairo dismissed the International Justice Group as liars and repeated a claim that the Gamaa had given credit to Jihad.

It said that to prove the veracity of its own claim it was presenting extracts from reports sent to the Jihad leadership during preparatory monitoring of embassy activity.

The reports said most embassy staff turned up for work between 10 a.m. and 10.30 a.m. and that the busiest days were Sunday, the first day of the working work, and Wednesday, when the embassy prepared the diplomatic pouch.

"So it was decided in advance to carry out the operation on one of those two days," it said.

Many of the embassy staff used white 1988 Toyota Corollas, except the ambassador, who came in a white Mercedes. It gave the licence plate numbers of five embassy cars.

Officials have not said exactly who they think did it but an Interior Ministry statement said on Thursday that police had found a white car which Jihad planned to use in a suicide bombing to coincide with the Islamabad operation.

The Egyptian embassy in Sofia meanwhile stepped up security after an incident in which an airgun was fired at the ambassador's residence.

Police patrolled the street outside the embassy, and pedestrians and cars were diverted away from the building as a result of Monday's incident in which three unidentified persons approached the embassy, with one of them firing an airgun at ambassador may Mohammad Abdul Dahab's house.

DEMAND ACTION TURNS VIOLENT: Anti-riot police and ex-combatants clash outside a building in San Salvador after the police stormed the building to free 27 hostages. The ex-combatants took over the building demanding pensions and other payments promised by the government in a 1994 agreement that ended 12 years of civil war. Ten hostages were released before riot police stormed the building (AFP photo)

Egyptian court deals severe blow to Muslim Brotherhood

CAIRO (Agencies) — An Egyptian military court has struck a damaging blow to the fundamentalist Muslim Brotherhood, jailing dozens of the influential group's leaders and shutting down its Cairo headquarters.

Tolerated for years by Egypt's government, the outlawed but avowedly non-violent Brotherhood was finally sentenced on Thursday at the same military court which has sent dozens of militants to the gallows for their three-year campaign of killings aimed at overthrowing President Hosni Mubarak.

Fifth-four Brotherhood members, some standing in next week's parliamentary elections, received up to five years hard labour on charges including organising an illegal group, holding illegal secret meetings and preparing anti-government leaflets.

"The state is practising terrorism against us," the Brotherhood's ageing spokesman Mamoun Al Hodeibi told Reuters after police threw him out of the group's office and closed it off with string and sealing wax just minutes after the verdict.

The Brotherhood, Egypt's largest fundamentalist group, says it is committed to turning the country into a strict Islamic state through peaceful means.

But after years of turning a blind eye while it tackled the violent militant groups seeking Mr. Mubarak's downfall, the government last year turned on the Brotherhood, saying it was inextricably linked to the militants.

Diplomats in Cairo said the decision to send the defendants to military trial, which followed the passing earlier this year of harsh new press laws, reflected a clear toughening of the government's stand against political opposition.

Amnesty International denounced the trial saying the defendants were prisoners of conscience and called for their immediate release.

Shortly after the verdict the Interior Ministry said it had arrested 36 men planning suicide attacks in Egypt and said it had evidence they were being trained by militants granted haven in Sudan, Britain, Austria and other countries.

The ministry also appeared to substantiate claims by the militant Jihad group that it carried out the bomb attack on Egypt's embassy in Islamabad which killed 17 people on Sunday.

The ministry statement said police seized pistols, explosives, forged documents, Jihad leaflets and a white car prepared for a suicide bomb attack in Egypt that was to take place simultaneously with the attack on the Islamabad embassy. (see separate story)

The Brotherhood says the compaign against it was motivated by the government's desire to discredit it before next week's parliamentary elections, in which dozens of Brotherhood candidates are expected to participate.

The men, many of them doctors, professors and religious scholars, were thought to represent the bridge between the Brotherhood's elderly, traditional leadership and its youngest activists. Many of the defendants were in their 40s and 50s.

"This is a political case. There are no crimes. All the evidence is false," Salah Abdul-Maqsoud, a journalist and Brotherhood member, said before he was acquitted Thursday. "This is in fact a case of opinion and ideology."

The court sentenced five Brotherhood members to five years at hard labour and 49 to three years in jail, some at hard labour. Convictions and sentences are handed down at the same time.

Importantly, the court also ordered the Brotherhood's headquarters in downtown Cairo closed.

There is no appeal after military trials. Human rights groups have sharply criticized the courts, arguing that civilians accused of non-violent crimes should not face the military courts.

Police barred 300 relatives and supporters from the courtroom on a military base at Haekstep, 40 kilometres east of Cairo. The defendants, dressed in white gowns, stood behind a makeshift cage, silent and relaxed as the verdicts were read.

Afterward, Essam El Iryan, one of the main defendants who had planned to enter Wednesday's election, led the group in orderly chants. None of the men yelled or showed any anger in a courtroom mostly empty except for red-bereted guards.

"God is our saviour and our supporter," the men chanted in unison for about two minutes. "The Koran is our constitution, the prophet is our leader, holy war is our way, death for the sake of God is our most valued hope."

U.N. tightens Iraq monitoring

BAGHDAD (R) — The United Nations is tightening its monitoring procedures of Iraq's arms industry to ensure that Baghdad will not resurrect its weapons programmes in future, a senior United Nations arms official said on Friday.

"We are constantly improving, adapting and modifying the monitoring system," said Goran Wallen, director of the ongoing monitoring and verification (OMV) centre in Baghdad.

He told Reuters the United Nations had recently brought in new surveillance equipment, remote-control cameras, sensors, air samplers and temperature metres to guarantee that no prohibited activity would take place in Iraq.

The U.N. set up a special commission — UNSCOM — shortly after the ceasefire in the 1991 Gulf war over Kuwait to ensure that Baghdad is stripped of all weapons of mass destruction and install a monitoring system so that it does not acquire or produce such weapons in future.

Iraq is under wide-ranging sanctions, including an oil embargo, for invading Kuwait in 1990. The removal of the oil ban is linked to full compliance with the U.N. weapons demands.

UNSCOM's Chairman Rolk Ekeus is due in Baghdad on Monday for another round of talks with the Iraqi authorities on data related to their past weapons programmes.

Mr. Wallen said the number of remote-control cameras more than doubled in the past four months from 50 to 110. "We are also changing our patterns of inspections, employing new types of sensors. It is an absolute necessity," he said.

He said UNSCOM was still looking forward to receiving more information from the Iraqis and wanted to have a deep look at archives at the ministry of defence and the Military Industrialisation Commission.

Iraq criticised UNSCOM on Friday, saying it bowed to pressure from the United States and other regional powers which did not like to see its work in Iraq completed.

"There is a trend led by the United States and certain regional and international circles which do all their best to delay UNSCOM's work or twist its decisions and evaluation," the ruling Baath Party newspaper said in a commentary.

Baghdad says it has nothing left to hide and met conditions set by the Gulf war ceasefire for it to have the oil ban eased or lifted.

Mr. Wallen, a retired rear admiral in the Swedish navy, said the new monitoring mechanism was also necessitated by what he described as "Iraqi dynamism" to reconstruct and revitalise all that allied bombing destroyed in the Gulf war.

"The (Iraqis) are very dynamic. They are moving equipment, starting production, terminating production," he said.

Mr. Wallen, 64, said about 80 international experts were involved in OMV operations in Iraq, aided by three German CH-53 helicopters that were equipped with state-of-the-art surveillance gear and were free to fly anywhere in the country.

He said he sensed no negative reaction from the Iraqis to the United Nations for intensifying its monitoring activities.

"We have no signs that they are not fully cooperative. They provide the technical support we need in our work."

Barcelona summit heralds new role for Israel

Agence France Presse

ISRAEL'S PARTICIPATION at a landmark Barcelona conference will mark a new step in ending its lingering international isolation and see it anchor itself firmly among the countries of the Mediterranean.

"There is a lot of symbolism involved in our participation. Israel does not belong to any other international body except the United Nations," said Harry Kney-Tal, deputy director geneal of policy planning in the Israeli foreign ministry.

Foreign ministers from 27 countries are taking part in the two-day conference which opens on Monday. Apart from the 15 memebrs of the European Union, thee will be eight Arab participants as well as representatives from Israel, Turkey, Cyprus and Malta.

The Jewish state's newfound acceptance by its Mediterranean neighbours was largely a reward for the progress made in the Middle East peace process, Mr. Kney-Tal said.

"Such Israeli participation would have been out of the question a few years ago. A taboo has been broken and meant Europe could convene a gathering where Israel sits across the table from Arab and non-Arab."

But Israeli officials stressed the conference would not be a substitute for the peace process.

The summit's aim is to set out and adopt a joint declaration of goals on a wide range of issues from security, immigration, terrorism and nuclear non-proliferation to trade, human rights and the environment.

More than $12 billion in aid and loans has been earmarked by the EU to help development in southern and eastern Mediterranean countries over the next five years, but Israel will not qualify for any funds because of its strong economy.

Instead the Israeli delegation, backed by a team of technical experts and led by new Foreign Minister Ehud Barak on his first engagement abroad since taking office on Wednesday, is aiming to offer its know-how to its neighbours.

"It is an ambitious programme, but it is a serious one," said Mr. Kney-Tal, who has been involved in a series of preparatory meetings since July to hammer out a draft declaration.

"It is the first time in the post-cold war era that we are trying to adopt an integrated approach to improve security and prosperity in the Mediterranean basin."

The Jewish state believes it can offer expertise in fields such as improving water supplies, cultivating deserts and technology to help its neighbours.

"We are putting our experience and knowledge to the service of every single participant in the area without exception, and we also want to benefit from the experiences of others," said Michael Bavly, the foreign ministry's deputy director for western Europe.

One of the specific aims is to set up a free trade zone by 2010 for industrial and manufactured goods, but not agriculture.

This year Israel's gross national product is due to reach $75 billion, and its per capita income is among the 20 highest in the world at $15,500.

No actual projects will be put to the meeting though, which aims to adopt a declaration of principles and lay down a programme for the future.

Many eyes will also be on what happens on the sidelines of the conference with Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al Sharaa due to attend. Despite signs from both sides that they are ready to resume negotiations, Israeli officials said no meeting was planned between Mr. Sharaa and Mr. Barak, although they would be ready for any opportunity.

The Palestinian delegation is to be led by Yasser Arafat, and Israel's other partners in peace Jordan and Egypt will also be present.

The other Arab participants will be Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon and Algeria.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Hoax bomb sent on El Al flight

TEL AVIV (AFP) — An Israeli daily reported Friday that it had sent a hoax bomb packed in a suitcase on board an El Al flight from Tel Aviv to Europe. "After the assassination of prime minister Yitzhak Rabin on Nov. 4, we wanted to see how efficient the security was on the national airline," the daily Maariv said. "There was not the slightest control. Our journalist was able to send the hoax death bomb without any difficulties and without getting on board." It pictured the bomb in an open case with a red label saying: "Attention there may be a bomb." Transport Minister Israel Kessar said he would hold an urgent meeting next week to investigate security failings within the national carrier, which prides itself as one of the most secure in the world.

Bomb threat forces Egyptain plane to land

DUBAI (AFP) — An Egyptair passenger plane flying between Islamabad and Cairo was forced to make an emergency landing Friday in Dubai after receiving what turned out to be a false bomb threat, a crew member said. While the Airbus aircraft was flying over Oman, air traffic controllers in Muscat told the plane's crew that they had received an nonymous call saying there was a bomb on board the plane, the source said. The plane, which was due to make a stop in Dubai, made an emergency landing far from the terminal, and the passengers, mostly Pakistanis, were quickly evacuated. Bomb experts and police searched the aircraft for three hours but did not find anything. The plane left early Friday evening for Cairo.

Rabbi warns Israelis to respect Sabbath

SAFED (AFP) — A rabbi warned Israelis of another earthquake like the one that rocked the country earlier this week if they do not respect the Sabbath, a report said Friday. "If the Israeli people do not respect the seventh day (Saturday), I predict an earthquake of seven points on the Richter scale," said Rabbi Dov Kook, from the northern town of Safed. The rabbi, quoted by the Israeli news agency ITIM, recalled that Jews are not allowed to work or to use their vehicles or electricity during the Sabbath, from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday. "When the people provoke the anger of God, it is very dangerous. The quakes over these last days are just small tremors, if the Jews do not return to religion, the next one will be much stronger," Rabbi Kook said. The agency said Rabbi Kook has predicted an earthquake three weeks ago.

Algerian bound over on French extradition request

LONDON (AFP) — Rachid Ramda, an Algerian wanted in connection with a series of terrorist bomb attacks in France, will be held here for another week while France prepares its case for extradition. The Bow Street court told Mr. Ramda's lawyer that he would be bound over in custody for another week. France must present documents in support of its extradition request before a December 18 deadline. Mr. Ramda, 26, was one of five persons arrested here on the weekend of Nov. 4 in raids carried out in Islamic fundamentalist circles in West London. French Justice Minister Jacques Toubon has said Mr. Ramda played a key role in the eight bombings or attempted bombings that have hit France since July 25, killing eight people and injuring more than 200. Mr. Ramda had appeared twice before two London courts, and is being held "for serious charges" related to a "conspiracy with a view to a bomb attack."

FIS is divided over dialogue offer

PARIS (Agencies) — A key leader of Algeria's banned Islamic opposition movement on Friday blasted as "treason" an open letter from the group's Bonn-based overseas leader offering dialogue with the current Algiers regime.

In a sign of dissent within the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), Anwar Haddam, who is considered the head of the FIS "parliamentary" delegation, denounced Tuesday's letter by Rabah Kebir which said the banned group recognised newly-elected President Liamine Zeroual and was ready to open a dialogue with him.

Mr. Haddam's statement, sent from Washington where he lives and made public in Paris, said Mr. Kebir's letter "binds in no way either the FIS nor the Mujahedeen." Algeria's Islamic insurgents who have fought the military-backed regime for the last four years.

"The person who signed the letter is the only one bound by it," Mr. Haddam said.

He denounced Mr. Kebir's letter as treason, saying: "This treason will never be forgotten in the collective conscience of our people."

Mr. Haddam insisted that any decision to open negotiations with the government in Algiers could only be taken by all FIS leaders "in the presence" of its two top chiefs, Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj, both detained by the Algerian authorities at secret locations.

Mr. Kebir has insisted that his letter to Mr. Zeroual had the support of imprisoned FIS leaders. He was quoted Thursday in the Arabic newspaper Al Hayat as saying "four years of violence is enough" and that his offer of a dialogue had the "support of FIS leaders inside and outside" Algeria.

His letter had raised hopes for an end to Algeria's bloody civil war, which has left an estimated 30,000 to 50,000 people dead since 1992, when the army cancelled legislative elections the fundamentalist FIS had been poised to win and later outlawed the group.

The FIS, which had called for Algerians to boycott the presidential vote, was wrong-footed by the high turnout in the country's first multi-candidate presidential poll, a turnout which underscored weariness with the four-year-old conflict.

Mr. Kebir, who is based in Germany, effectively conceded Mr. Zeroual's win in his conciliatory letter this week addressed to "Mr. President."

"We believe the popular support which you gained may provide a great opportunity" to overcome obstacles to peace, Mr. Kebir said. "We confirm our permanent willingness to engage in dialogue."

Mr. Haddam has in the past endorsed the radical Armed Islamic Group (GIA).

There has been no sign since the election of Mr. Zeroual reaching out to the FIS to end a conflict in which an estimated 40,000 people have been killed.

COLUMN 8

Italy tightens ban on cigarette ads

ROME (AFP) — An appeals court has tightened a ban on cigarette advertising in Italy by prohibiting even indirect forms such as tobacco company sponsorships of racing car teams and cigarette logos on clothing. The government said Thursday that Italy ranked 10th in the world in cigarette consumption, with Italian smokers dishing out $10 billion last year to support their habit. Reaction to the new advertising ban was swift. Giacomo Agostini, 15-times world motorcycling champion, played it down as meaningless. "The world does nothing when faced with a war, do you think Formula One racing championships will stop because of this advertising ban?" Enrico Ferrari, director of the Monza Racing Car Track, said he wanted to see the exact wording of the ruling but would consult his lawyers to discuss its consequences. Massimo Gambucci of the Imola Race Track was gloomy in his assessment. "I can already say that this sentence will do a lot of damage to motorised sports in general, and Formula One and motorcycle racing in particular."

China seizes over 200 smuggled falcons

BEIJING (AFP) — Police swoops in the far northwestern Chinese region of Xinjiang have uncovered 80 cases of falcon smuggling in the past three months, involving 233 of the rare birds of prey, the Xinhua News Agency said Friday. Lured by the prospect of huge profits, poachers from neighbouring countries have "sneaked into Xinjiang" and tried to smuggle the falcons out of China, Xinhua said, adding that 600 smugglers had been punished in the three-month period. It did not specify how many were foreign nationals. Many of the smuggled birds were discovered at border crossings as the result of close cooperation between police, customs, quarantine, and aviation departments, the agency said. One of the falcon's major habitats, Xinjiang currently boasts some 20 nature reserves.

Kangaroos to go on the pill

SYDNEY (AFP) — The millions of kangaroos which are shot and poisoned in the Australian outback every year could well be spared their grisly fate by 2000, when they can — go on the pill. Experts at the new Marsupial Cooperative Research Centre, which opened here Thursday, are well on the way to producing a kangaroo contraceptive and centre director Professor John Rodger said he hopes to have it ready in three to five years. The Australian kangaroo population is controlled by a yearly cull because the animals compete with sheep and cattle for scarce food and water and cost hundreds of millions of dollars in lost farm production each year. Prof. Rodger said farmers' bullets and poison baits, apart from being ineffective in controlling kangaroo numbers, were "increasingly unacceptable for animal welfare reasons." And former Federal Environment Minister Graham Richardson, on hand for the opening of the centre Thursday, admitted he had blood on his hands — that of the millions of kangaroos he had approved for culling. Mr. Richardson said he "leapt at the chance" to become chairman of the next centre because he hoped "scientists would come up with the solutions that I never could when I was a minister." "No one was more responsible for the deaths of several million kangaroos," he said, owning up to the slaughter. "It was pretty distressing." He described the cull, which has seen up to four million kangaroos killed each year, as an awful dilemma for him personally and an international embarrassment to Australia. Mr. Rodger said he expected zoos and wildlife parks would administer the contraceptive in injection form while farmers could lay "contraceptive pellets" to sterilise kangaroos in problem areas.